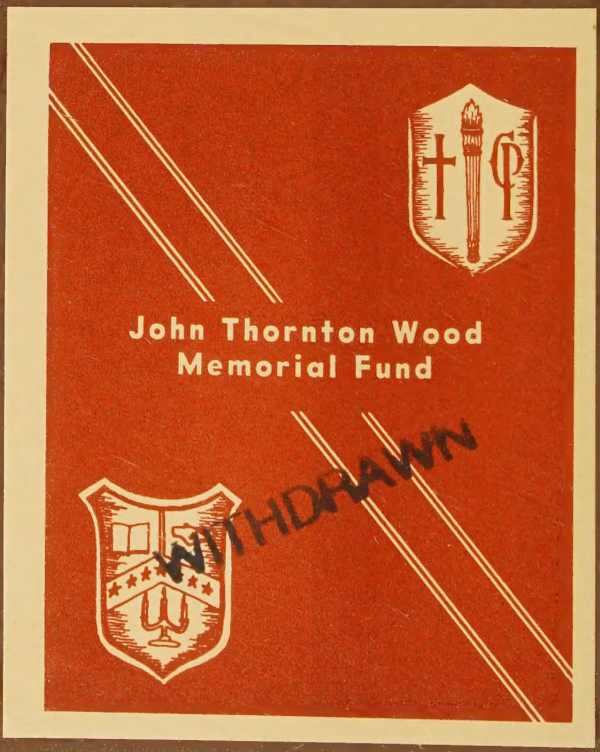
Theodore Dreiser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By

THEODORE DREISER

With Fifteen Symbols by
HUGH GRAY LIEBER

New York
BONI & LIVERIGHT
1928

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THE POET

OVER the grass beyond my door I saw them,
stately, measured, benign.
Kings and their great retinues, in blue and gold.
Princesses of many lands, with eyes of almond
form, and forms of porphyry;
A general on an elephant, urging his clanking
phalanxes to war;
A hero who died, shouting to the skies:
"Hail! Hail! Great is thy victory!"
An angel in a tree, who sang of love and called:
"Sing, thou";
A wall of demons that fell back before the hand of
aspiration;
Legions and legions of the air whose wings I heard;
The whisperings of trees and flowers and pools in
the dark.

* * * * *

And yet my soul was dumb of very grandeur.
In my mouth was the dust of despair and in my
heart;
For beyond my door I saw it ever—the great
procession—
Kings in state, and with measured steps and benign.

Generals and princesses, the air awhirr with wings,
In the tree the angel singing.

* * * * *

And yet forever I bent at a lowly task:
I sighed and sighed, and spoke not;
For in my heart was the fear of grandeur and of
beauty,
And over my voice the hush of power,
The while I lifted up my eyes beseechingly, be-
holding the wonder of it,
And my soul—wishing, wishing, wishing—
And then I died.

THE VISITOR

TAP, tap, tap.)
Yes, I hear.
But how do you hear without ears?
(Tap, tap, tap.)
Yes, I see.
But how do you see without eyes?
(Tap, tap, tap.)
You move things about.
I see that.
Therefore you have strength
And a sense of direction.
But how can that be,
Without body?—
Without form?
(Tap, tap, tap.)
Or, have you form?
Body?
(Tap, tap.)
And eyes?
And ears?
(Tap, tap.)
Or yet their like
In yet another way?
(Tap, tap. Tap, tap.)

Is there an up where you are?
Or a down?
(Tap.)
A right? A left?
(Tap.)
What are you like, O visitor,
That here upon my table,
Chair,
Thus taps and taps and taps
(Tap, tap.)
Without a trace of gain,
(Tap, tap.)
And why to travail so
With those who do not know?—
Who cannot know?—
Who cannot see or hear
Beyond these taps?
(Tap, tap. Tap, tap.
Tap, tap. Tap, tap.
Tap, tap. Tap, tap.
Tap, tap. Tap, tap.)

TALL TOWERS

TALL towers.
Clustered pinnacles.
Varied and fretted flowers of stone and steel.
That island the upper air
That top the fogs and storms.
Erect.
Elate.
Frowning.
Stern.
That shoulder in toothy canyons.
That march in serried ranks.
Dreams.
Ambitions.
Illusions.
Moods.
An architect has uttered a building,
A poet a tower.

Tall towers that ants have builded.
That mite and midge have reared.
Clustered pinnacles
That prow and pierce the windy sky,
That ark a horde of trudging ants.
That roof a world of burrowing moles.

Yet at your base the immemorial river,
And about your feet the contemptuous, immemorable soil
And before your strength the innumerable years.

Tall towers.
Clustered pinnacles.
Defiant spears of steel and stone.
Aye, but the inevitable winds that rag your strength.
Aye, but the inevitable cold that bites and eats.
Aye, but the inevitable days that front and wait.
Aye, but the unbroken grass that will bed you all.

. . . . Proteus . . . . .

PROTEUS

BIRDS flying in the air over a river.
And children playing in a meadow beside it.
A stream that turns an ancient wheel
Under great trees.
And cattle in the water
Below the trees.
And sun, and shade,
And warmth, and grass.
And myself
And not myself
Dreaming in the grass.

And I am the birds flying in the air over the river.
And the children playing in the meadow.
And the stream that turns the ancient wheel.
And the wheel.
And the turn of the wheel.
And the great trees that stir and whisper in the breeze.

And the cattle under them.
The sun, the shade,
The warmth, the grass,
And myself
And not myself,
Dreaming in the grass.

For it is spring
And youth is in my heart.
For I am youth
And spring is my heart.

FOR I HAVE MADE ME A GARDEN

FOR I have made me a garden,
Under the shadow of swords.

* * * * *

Beyond it are the hard forests
And the sad plains
And the black rivers,
Where, with cries and with moans,
Men seek to live.
—And many things:
Fierce beasts,
Wild birds,
The savage fly,
Harry,
The one the other,
And die.
(The terror. The death.)

* * * * *

But here, within my garden,
Under the shadow of swords,
What sweetness! What peace!
A rising sun
And a setting sun,
A rising moon
And a setting moon,

Make color
And bloom
And beauty,
Lighting it always.
And unharried men
And unharried beasts
And birds
And flowers
Dream here,
Or browse,
Or wing in comfort,
Within the shadow of my palms
And to the whisper of my leaves.

* * * * *

For I have made me a garden,
Under the shadow of swords.

STATIC

YOU limitless actions!
You unperformed deeds—
Resident
Within my soul!
You angers quelled,
And fought combats unfought,
You dissipated fears
And flights unfled,
Emotions conquered—
All you ready states
That have been thoughts with me.

* * * * *

Oh, blood most toned
And muscles taut,
And details of intended deeds,
Schemed out,
Or simulated.
Yet, like a motor,
Throttle wide,
And spark advanced,
And engine racing,
Ready for the race,
I throb and tremble,
Energy unused,

And stand,
Idle,
At rest,
At meditation,
Motivating thought alone,
The while the will
That should connect with deed
Stands still
And unconnected.

* * * * *

I am exhausted
By that which I dream
But do not do.

SONG

OLD woman.
Old woman.
Grey hair
And dirty face
And claws for hands.
And a rag for a shawl.
And a grey veil of dirty hair
Before your eyes.

Where do you bed, old woman?
In what hole of the earth?
Under what shelf of rock?
Facing what blackened heath?
What thunder shaken waste?
Not in a tame city street, really?
Not in a rancid slum, truly?
When you might dance about a fire
With other hags
And in lightning and in rain
Mouth and mumble
Plagues upon the world.

Old woman.
Old woman.

Of what do you mumble?
And what is your need?
Youth again?
Beauty again?
Love again?
Dreams again?

Old woman.
Old woman.
Wrinkled of face
And rheumy of eye.
Of what do you groan
Beneath your bent shoulders?
Your filthy rag of a shawl?
And your veil of grey
And dirty hair?

The Sailor

THE SAILOR

I WALK the deck of dogma
Steering by the light of faith
By the pole-star of conviction.
There are rumors of dark shores
Of lands of evil
Of coasts of disillusion
But my compass points straight.
I hold by my all-seeing God,
My all-knowing science.
And yet,—
And yet—
These bits of inexplicable sea-weed!
That something
That may be drift of what?—
There in the dark?
Illusion?
Unreality?
And that evil wind-tossed bird
That wings
And wings
And cries
Of what?

From what uncharted shore?
From what black coast of ill?
From what black coast of hell
Come these?

WOOD NOTE

THE whistle of a train—
Sound instinct with the richness of the woodland;
The thinness of air; the lightness of trees;
Shadows, darkness, undergrowth;
A pool gleaming under the stars—
Of what vast deep is this the echo?
Of what old dreams the answer?

THE GUARDIAN

YOU whispering, pushing thing,
You damned equation
Between the weak and strong
The wise and foolish
Whom not one hero braves or flaunts
Yet whom none would obey
Save with the lip,
Yet whom all men fear
And flatter,
Dreading now your eyes, your voice—
You are the thing one hates
Yet may not slay.

Oh, shabby, petty master,
Agog above our thoughts
As 'gainst the thoughts of others,
And over all our deeds
As 'gainst the deeds of others.
You carp;
Complain
And ask the reason why,
The while you foresee all;
Know all our moods
And what we needs must do
When do we must.

Come, now—
The thing which you call sin
Is still not sin to me,
Or you.
Your standards,
Right or wrong,
Are still not mine,
Or yours.
Yet even so, I tremble,
Knowing still your power,
Upon you fawn,
Fearing the things
You yet might do.

Oh, damned equation!
Cheap, mean average
Between the strong and weak,
The wise and dull,
All knaves and fools.

How swiftly would I strike,
How seize upon the things I need,
And wreak my will
An 'twere not for this thing,
Your blatant, warning voice,
That asks,
And seeks to know,
And broods on what I do,
Continually.

ETUDE—RAIN

ROPES of silver,
Chains of thin, bright steel
Gliding from summer thunder clouds
Into a green meadow.
A stream of yellow
Upon the surface of which,
As it falls,
Spring tiny domes of silver mist.
And cattle brown and red
And black and white
Munch the green grass,
Wet
And glistening
After the heat,
The while the distant thunder
Bellows.

And now a butterfly
Struck by a pearl of rain,—
A silver bullet—
Collides with a wet, pink thistle.
And stumbling,
Falls.

Its black and purple wings
Flower-wise outspread
Upon the turbid bosom
Of this yellow flood.

SHADOW

YOU are a memory.
The flash of those cannas
In that desolate small yard,
Brings back your home,—
Your parents' lone possession,—
Your beaten,
Disheartened father.
Your angular, wearied mother.

You are a memory.

A brook in a field
Beyond the rim of your small town
With one over-arching tree,
And five cows
Knee-deep in clear water
And yellow dandelion,—
Eyes of the spring—
Starring the ground
Bring you back,—
An April smile,
Eyes like the sea,
Eyes like the sky,

And a mood,
April and magic,
That calls even now.

You are a memory.

A shadow merely.
A blue flower memory
That this flash of lightning
In this summer storm
Brings back,
An eager, seeking face
And seeking hands,
A little fear
And a greater love,
Sufferings,
Hope,
Dreams,
To which the storm about
Was small.

You are a memory.

This tall building
In this wretched town,
This cross-town nondescript car,
That drug-store on the corner,
That old man
In that woeful yard
Cutting grass,

That petty church
Brings back
You—
You—

Sweetly,
Ruefully,
Tenderly,
Evanescently
Brings.

For you were sunshine,
And light,
And air—
A dream,
A mood.
And these,
These,
Are but the stubborn crumbling things
That have outlasted
You
A little while.

THE STREAM

OH, the great urge—the vivid, clashing stream!
In it men tumble and clash.
They steer their cockleshells against a swirling tide.
They strain and curse each other in the harbor marts.
And the reaches of it are wide, wide,
And there is no horizon and no boundary.

* * * * *

And here is one who says that Jesus will save,
And another, Buddha,
And another, Marduk,
And another, Osiris,
And another, Zeus,
And another, Thor,
And another, "gold is all,"
And many there are who cry: "There is no God."

* * * * *

Yet all the while the stream runs, clashing, bright,
And men strain and curse in the harbor marts.
They cry and part with that they love.

* * * * *

And there is no boundary, and there is no horizon.

THE FAR COUNTRY

HARK,
I will go aside,
Into the Land of Youth,
The Vale of Promise,
By the shores of the Sea of Wonder,
At the feet of the Mountains of Ambition,
And there I will dream
That I have youth,
And all the whips of want.
And necessity,—
Hunger,—
And that food would make me whole;
Loneliness of heart
And that love would heal it;
Poverty,
And that riches
Would supply my direst need;
Inconsequence
And that fame would repair
The indifference of men.

Yet, never, never, never,
Would I part from these more.
Oh, never!

Neither from hunger,
Nor poverty,
Nor inconsequence,
Nor loneliness of heart.
Oh, never.

Lest satiety come
And the ruefulness of the years
That spell the end of youth
And dreams,
And that
Never, never, never,
Should I again know youth
Or hunger,
Or hope,
Or the wonder,
And the fulfillment
Of dreams.

THE RIDDLE

I SEE this empty skull which you show me.
I know that the force which produced it can do it again.
I know that the skill that constructed this framework was inherent in the spirit which occupied this framework.
I know that it cannot die.
And when it was through with this framework it departed.
Where that spirit now is I do not know.

DEMONS

DEMONS—
Demons—
Demons—
Everywhere,
And yet nowhere.
Pale souls of evil,
Envious,
Hungry,
Indifferent,
Cruel,
Issuing from their graves
To prey upon men.
Demons of the chimney
And the fireside,
The cow-shed
And the kitchen.
Demons of the living-room,
The pantry shelf,
The jar.
Demons
Of the water,
The air,
The earth,
Fire.

Demons by millions
That waylay the traveler,
Envy the well,
Attack the sick,
The fortunate,
And the unfortunate,
Plot evil,
That scurry in the dark,
Or the light,
March beside the weary,
Direct the knife,
The bullet,
The poison.
Here they wing,
Before us,
Behind,
Dancing on nothing,
Crying out from above,
Below,
Whirring as birds with wings—
Demons—
Demons—
Demons—
Of the earth,
The air,
The sky,
The sea.

BUT I HAVE NOT LOVE

LINNET'S eggs in the gorse bushes
So prickly and yellow
Smelling so sweet
In the April sunshine.
But
I have not love.

Eggs in the chaffinches' nest
At the end of the garden hedge
Tiny blue eggs of the hedge sparrow
Hidden below new leaves.
But
I have not love.

The happy tints of summer's curtains
Put up unexpectedly in the night
Upon the young trees
After the dreary winter rains,—
But
I have not love.

The sight of the first celandine.
Of forsythia.
The sight of hayfields by the river

Starred with spring flowers
As I wander through them.
But
I have not love.

The radiance of the children's faces,
Of children's voices
Of children's dancing feet
Under the elms.
The delicate veils of blossoms
Cast as a gossamer mist
Over tree and bush.
But
I have not love.

All the scents and sounds of the garden,
Of spring,
Of the new year
Coming in at the window
Where I dream.
But,—oh—
I have not love.

FORMULÆ

I AM a scaly pickerel,
But newly landed upon this green bank
By a hook,
A gasping mechanism
That needs air and water
And some other elements
To make me go;
A form of which there are millions,
Easily ended.
Wanting air,—
Water,
I cease.

But the form,
The idea of the form
Of which I am a replica,
That will not die—
It cannot, I suspect.
As good fish as I am
Will endlessly be made
So long as they are needed,
Smooth, moving, balanced mechanisms,
That must have air and water
To make them go.

But the sensation of reality that I had!
The happy, balanced, moving combination
    that I was
Of mathematical angles
And planes
And circles
And elements!

SKY IMAGERY

ECSTASIES that suffuse the skies.
Songs of clouds.
Lyrics of diaphanous mist.
Dazzling exhalations and emanations
That make of moisture and sun
The coruscating halls of Aurora.

Snowy pastures,
Vaporous mountains,
Islands and continents
The shores of which
A Magellan
Or a Frobisher
Might explore.
Islands of fire.
Islands of gold
Or wool.

And a bacchante now dances
Upon golden spume,
Golden sands,
Golden fleece.
And a prophet shadows his coming
In tinted, evanishing vapor.

Or
A vaporous Attila or Napoleon
Rides before his cohorts
Toward the ever-receding plains
Of a continent
That flies before the wind,
Evanishes before the heat
Of a rising,
Or the failing light
Of a setting
Sun.

LITTLE DREAMS: LITTLE WISHES

LITTLE dreams;
Little wishes;
Unfulfilled longings and desires
That bud and blossom in the heart of failure
And need
Perfuming and tinting the unhappy hours
With color—
Beauty—

* * * * *

Little dreams;
Unsatisfied longings
Colorful evocations
Of the heart and mind
That grow
And bloom
Where is only weakness
And despair—
That bloom where is only sorrow and longing
Tinting the sky of misery
Lightening the heart
Of Failure—
And need.

* * * * *

Little dreams;
Unfulfilled wishes

That front the frosts of want and death
Or haven the heart
In those pale, pale gardens
That lie
Where only misery is
And yearning—
And need.

THE HOPELESS LOVER

YOU
Are a little flame
Dancing faintly
In the air;
And I,
I
A young tree
In the Spring,
Rooted
And standing out alone
Against the sky.

You
Are a sparkling, bubbling stream
Foaming over rocks
And making black pools
In smooth places;
And I,
I
Am a dry bank,
A rock
That bends over you
As you run.

You
Are a wind.
A strong,
A terrible wind
That blows
Out of the darkness
Of a stormy sea;
And I,
I
Am a boat
Left on the shore of your sea
By a fisherman.

You
Are the clouds that race and run
In the sky
Before a great wind;
And I,
I
Am the greyness
Of your shadow
Upon the land.

THE GLADIATOR

TO stifle the suffering
In one's own heart,
To stand up wounded
And bleeding
Before the vast amphitheatre
Of Life,
All digits down—
To face unflinching
The throne of power,
The lions of disaster,
The jackals of detraction—
Their teeth all white;
To hear the applause for the victor
The shouts of derision
For failure;
To feel the pull of the net of treachery
The thrust of the javelin of pain—
And to know, also
That within the vast amphitheatre
Sit only those
Who seek the blood of failure,
The condescension of the victor,
Who deride weakness
And adore strength—

And yet to look unflinching
Blood gushing from wounds
Short sword in hand
Death at elbow
And cry—
Hail, Life—
Farewell.

* * * * *

Is this not He?
And has he not won,
And does he not deserve the name of
Him

Who
Has won
The only Victory?

TO A WOOD DOVE

YOU with your breaking, melting note, Oh, Dove,
You mourn for that which never comes, Oh, Dove,
And that you mourn is that which makes to mourn
The wide world over—
Youth that is youth, and yet is fear of age,
And death,
And pain.
And hope that shimmers, fading as it flies,
And beauty that, a needed lamp, burns out,
And love that need is, and would love its need—
The wide world over.
You with your breaking, melting note, Oh, Dove.

MORITURI TE SALUTAMUS

WHEN youth realizes that it is no longer youth—
When age realizes that it is age—
The night approaches!
The body fails!
How in the hour of this certitude the mind darkens!
The world flaunts its banners in gay suggestion;
It shoulders the weary in rude indifference;
On, on, and out of the way!
And yet the halls are echoing the voice of pleasure;
The urge is to eat and drink and be merry;
The call is for beauty.
Do you take your weariness and gloom and depart.

LOVE SONG

DEAD, yellow leaves whirl past
As we struggle on.
The willows bend down
To the alders—
The alders
Desolately
To the reeds—
And these
In turn
Quiver
As they touch the surface
Of the swollen ditches.

* * * * *

Rain!
That soaks the garments of these passing figures
Making them cling
In Phidian lines
Like swirls of wind and rain.

Rain!
That on the back of the wind
Gestures and gesticulates
Strikes and stings—

Making of the efforts
Of these flocks of struggling birds
Inept and blundering, and rudderless swoops—
Their wings beating aimlessly,
Vainly.

Rain!
That blurs the window panes
Of every house.
Shutting in the light,
Shutting out the heart—
That beats the curls
Of upward venturing smoke
Into dank smudgy shawls—
Makes of your face
And grey eyes
A glassy masque
Wet with the tears
Of this vast
Inconsolable
Niobe
The earth.
It plucks at the soul with a dank and cloudy hand
Drains the heart of its courage
Whispering of endless days of rain
And gloom
As though one
In search of warmth and life
Must sink in these sunless swirls
Wing with these awkward birds and leaves
Rest in these blurred and desolate fields

And droop as do these trees and grass
And never rise

* * * * *

But with you—
Ah, the heaven of rain.

THE CRY

HARK you, my message is of storm and
stress and death.
Of fair days and still waters I say naught.
They need not me.
I am not here to croon of peace
That now, but for an hour is
And then is gone,
I stand to yell of rocks
And fanged reefs,
That ever are,
That ever wait,
That now,
About my base
Center and hiss and leap with death.
I shriek of wind and fog alone,
Wild brothers of my strength,
Because of whom I am.

Look not to me for song,
Or peace,
Or dream.

I bellow of death,
Death,
And of that fear of death
That in the human heart
Will never die.

THE RIVAL GODS

TWO gods, two gods.
And each his solemn hall.
And each his ponderous throne.
And each his lamps, his worshippers, his gifts.
And one may worship one,—
The other not at all.
Or hate the one
And love the other much.
Or fear the one too much,
The other not enough.
But to fear both,
Or to hate both,
Or to love both,
Or not to love or hate,—
That may not be.
For so 'tis willed by both.

Two gods upon their ponderous thrones,
Each silent in his giant hall.

DIANA

ARE you truly friendly
To the souls
And the aspirations
Of men?
Are you?

* * * * *

Moonlight in melting radiance
Splintered and powdered silver,
Showering the earth as with an infinitesimal
rain,
Floating as a pale, diaphanous mist
About the motionless shadow of this tower;
The stillness
And ecstasy of these trees.

* * * * *

From the depths of Roland water
Rises a perch,
Fresh from the dusk
At the bottom of his pool
To flick
And flash
In perturbed
And liquid silver
Only to sink again
And then rise;

And now this owl
Asleep in his treasured gloom,
Or shaken from his lethargy
By your light,
Pitches from this dead tree
To wing your silvered fields
In search of light
And life.

* * * * *

And grass saps,
And tree saps,
The blood and life
Of strange flowers and weeds
Stir in their paler dreams
Filling this meadow
And this river
With the meaning and the perfume of
their dreams.
And the souls of all who sleep
Or dream
Not dead
Now rise
And run
Or confer
Or mutter and bleat
Under the silver ecstasy of your rays
Among the solemn milk white cattle
And trees
And flowers
Of your light.

* * * * *

Hearts sob
Or sigh
And in languid pallid dreams
Under your light
Tell of their sorrows
Or their desires.

* * * * *

Are you truly friendly
Oh, Diana,
To the aspirations
And the souls
Of men?

THE PASSING FREIGHT

OUT of the mystery
And meaninglessness of things
And into it again;
A train bearing cotton
With thunder and smoke
And a flare of fire,
Yet bearing that
Which is nothing more than an idea;
That has come out of the darkness of
chemistry
And will soon return into it.
This train itself
Its engine
These cars
Ideas—
Ideas—
Iron
Wood
Form
Ideas—
Ideas—
Evoked in the mysteries
Where are energy
And chemistry—
And soon returning into them.

Yet sublimely screaming
And hurrying
With that
Which is but an idea
And has come from the dark
And will soon return into it.

And I, myself,
Who view it
And admire—
Out of the mystery
And meaninglessness of things
And into them again.

GEDDO STREET

BLEARY dwellings,
Dreary dwellings—
Mansions remodeled into tawdry shops;
And flaming posters on vacant lots
Telling of dubious attractions
Or impossible delights—
For these.
And open saloon doors at every corner,
And girls and children
Plodding home through the wet wintry streets,
Or,
In summer,
Idling in hallways
Or doors
Or windows,
Or slipping away to the gayeties of a trumpery beach
Or a park,
And dreaming rag dreams
Of happiness
In rags.

* * * * *

And the flash of splendid machines,
Speeding to the west,
That never pause.
And the looks of eyes
That know not this,
Nor vice defiant,
Nor poverty equally so,
Nor aught of rags,
That make all riches interesting.

. . . . .

Yet Geddo Street,
It knows—
It knows its worth
(This dirty street,
This meanest street,
This beaten street)—
It knows that *it* it is,
Antithesis of *that*—
That makes that other
Interesting.

EPHEMERON

BETRAYED!
But not by the thousand impossible Gods
Of mine own invention
To whom I have yearningly
And hopelessly prayed,
But by mine own lacks
And insufficiencies
That are not of my creating.

Ask me not whose.

Tremendous bulks of raging elements.
Suns with girths too vasty for conception,—
A billion light years hence.
Algol
With two dead monsters at his shoulders.
Space
With a billion dead monsters
Ready to resolve themselves
Upon impact
Into vasty veils of fire.
Stupendous bridals of the dead
That bring to birth
New suns.

But how?
Why?

Ask me not how or why.

An eternity of time behind one.
An eternity of time before one.
An ephemeron
In time and space.
One's life
A thing of moisture and of heat
Between degrees of "light" and "heat."
One's broodings
Feeble and purblind—
Poor fruit,
Pathetic fruit,
Ridiculous fruit
Of illimitable space,
Illimitable time,
Illimitable strength,
Illimitable wisdom.

Betrayed.
But not by the Gods of mine own invention
But by the lacks
That are not of me.

Ask me not of whom.

OH, YOU WHO FIND BEAUTY A WANTON

OH, you who find beauty a wanton.
Oh, you who find beauty a need.
In the dim hearts of you,—
Within the walls
Of your restrained
And defeated
Souls,
What lurking shadows,
What emptiness,
What loneliness,
While without,—
Beyond the gates
Of your immurèd dreams,
What gay gardens,
What flower-starred fields,
What glorious cloud-heads
Looking over your basalt walls
Into your sentineled keeps;
What whimper of winds
In tree fronds.
What star-dust of melodies
In the shadows

Beyond the rim
Of your defeat,—
Oh, you who find beauty a wanton.
Oh, you who find beauty a need.

FOR A MOMENT THE WIND DIED

FOR a moment the wind died,
And then came the sense of quieting leaves;
And then came the great stillness of the landscape;
And then the chorus of unheard insects;
And then the perfect sky, pouring a blaze of light
through mottled leaves.
And then the wind sprang up again—
And there was coolness in the air,
And for the face,
And the tired heart.

TETHERED

LITTLE boats that slip in and out of
strange harbors.
Morning and evening suns
Upon Fez,
The Yukon,
Venice and Karnak.
Morning and night,
Winter and summer,
Upon the moving tepees
Of Bedouins
And Tartars.
Ngan-si of the Chinese.
Kusaie of the Carolines.
Alto Grosso of Brazil.
Stars, clouds, night, day,
That hang above enormous peaks
In India,
In Peru,
In the Rockies,
At the Horn.

Mayan temples in Honduras.
Mysterious ruins upon Easter Island.
Armies of penguins at Palmerland.

Regiments of seal in Mackenzie Bay.
Enormous seas.
Strange birds.
Strange fishes.
Diverse and unheralded
Rivers,
Cities,
Plains,
Peoples,
That call and call,—
Mysterious and fascinating.

And I
I sit at my stupid desk
In an office.
Or hang behind the dreary counter
Of a "Great" store.
Count dimes or pennies.
Insure my flaccid "Life"
And see my world go by,—
My pinchbeck dole of years,
Without a move.
Without a look.
Without a search.
Without a try.

HIM

NO eyes, but all eyes;
No ears, but all ears;
No feet, but all feet,
Hurrying or not.
Handless, save for all hands,
Without emotion, save for all emotion.
Moving, building, seeking,
His face, every face
Or none.
His smile, every smile
Or none.
His frown, every frown
Or none.
His plan, every plan
Or none.

THE PERFECT ROOM

TALL walls
Bare walls
Disconsolate doors
That give on nothing of interest
Disconsolate windows
That frame
Disconsolate scenes.

* * *

And yet—
So many many things
That have consecrated
And made it beautiful.

* * *

Courage—strength,
Days of working;
Nights of waiting;
Patience,
A smile;
The little things
That love can do
In love.

* * *

Let no one call it mean,
Or poor,

For it is set with the gems,
And hung
With the tapestries
And flowers
Of that secret perfection
From which
All beauty springs—
Love—
Love—

THE BEGGAR

A WEARY face
A greyish beard
And rags.
And these outstretched, claw-like hands
That weave and seek,
And these rheumy, weary eyes
That stare and seek,
One of the faces,
One of the facets
One of the moods
Of the creator
That surely,
Surely
He need not wear.

HEYDAY

PROUD of my warm flesh
That is firm
And perfectly moulded.
Proud of the make and fashion of my being
That I did not make
And cannot retain.
Proud of my lightness,
My little feet,—
The light, sure feet of the young—
That touch the grass so sportively.
Proud to show the coy spirits of my youth
And beauty,
That can
At any moment
Make a gay sun to shine
In the dim hearts of those,
Who find my beauty
A need.

RELATED

THIS exquisite moment
Of pulsating relationship
Here—
Now—
To bird
Rock
Flower
Tree
Beast
Rain
Calm
Sound
Heat
Cold—
This companionship
Here and now
With wind
And sun
And sea
Gases
Forces—
This integrality
In variety
And perfect balance

Sentience of unison with all
From moment to moment
Hour to hour
Generation to generation;
This changing
Yet not changing beauty,
Drama.
This responding—
You—
I—
All static or moving
Things,
In joy,
In pain,
In elations,
Despairs;
Each and all,
As in a song,
As in a dirge,
As in a great cry of elation,
As in a great sob of misery,
Or sigh of indifference,
Or contest;
You.
I.
All things
To what future?
In what forever?

APRIL WEATHER

IN the silences,
Between the robin's song,
What magic
What tense, revivifying dreams.
Spring whispers,
Soil suspirations,
Light evocations,
Mind evocations.

* * * *

Gods and Goddesses who rise
And walk
The sere grass,
Where yet are only dog-mercury
And the green shoots of blue bells.
Nymphs and fauns
That dance a sarabande
Or skip and run.
And heavy
Slumbrous eyed dreamers,
Invisible
Yet real,
Who tread a torpid tread.
Their eyes
And robes

Heavy because of rest
And earth.

* * *

And ash saplings clash
Their thread-like stems
In the flicking, rippling wind.
And rabbits romp and frolic.
And a northering coletit
Sways and sings
Firm on a wind blown twig
Tch-ee! Tch-ee!

* * *

Oh, slumbrous
And yet full of youth;
Chill
And yet full of warmth;
Pale
And yet to be perceived,—
The substance of Gods
And of Spring.

AMID THE RUINS OF MY DREAMS

AMID the ruins of my dreams
Among the fragments of my aspirations
Alone and silent.
Sunny days that were to be—
Great hopes that were to be realized.
Applause—
Glory—
Strength—

But now to sit, thus
Amid these crumbled pillars
And beams
Of my hopes—
These huge
Disordered
Fallen
Girders
And arches—
The very dome of my temple of desire
Cracked and fallen
And to wait,
The night at hand,
Beneath the very stones
Of my aspirations
Amid the ruins of my dreams.

FLAHERTY JUNCTION

HOUSES on the outskirts,—
Dusty, paintless, but not old.
A lumber-yard, a creamery, a stock-pen,
Muddy and trampled and stinking.
And all near the station.
The station itself
As beautiful as an unpainted packing case.
And a row of stores as dreary as cow sheds.
And beyond these
Streets of houses,
So few,—
With trees that struggle painfully in rows,—
And spots of flowers and grass,
That struggle, too,
Behind picket fences;
And dusty roads that lead to where?
The plains—
Near Flaherty Junction.

And yet,
Beyond all this,
A land of herds and exquisite lakes,
Of endless prairie that reaches mile on mile to the sun;

And woolly cumulus clouds that float like ships
In a sapphire sea
And sunshine quivering upon open stubble
Like silvery, crinkling, rippling waves.
And tented wheat shocks that march like an army
To East, to West.

And in the spring
The newly broken fields
Are banners
Black or brown
Outspread across the hills and plains.
And in the fall
Shorn wheatlands bleak
Adroop in rain and wind
Make dancing heaths for witches.

And what if a bearded German and his wife,
Awry and agasp with the heat and dust
Stumble and fumble to a train or a store?
Or that a bony, frizzle-pated station-agent
Aweary of his life,
Hoists a dead calf to a baggage-car door?
Or that a broad-shouldered tramp
With a vicious pointed head
And a torn hat,
And the vacant air of a dreamer,
Loafs and stares aimlessly
From the shade of one end of the station
At the passing train?
Or that a lout with a mouth-organ

And hands like hams
Wipes tobacco juice from his lips
With the sleeve of his coat
And proceeds to play "Dixie"?
Or that a brick-colored Swede
Under a cap like a sauce-pan
Unlimbers a rusty Ford
With a noise like a thrashing machine
And rattles up a dusty road
Toward the plains?

For after all
What boots the state of man
Under the sun?
They own their homes,
Of barn- or box-like form,
And plough the fields and reap the grain
That feed such things as we;
They "freight" the kine,—
A hundred thousand head of steer,
A hundred thousand head of squealing swine
To us,—
To death.
The women they call "wives,"
The children they call "theirs"—
And play or slave for—
Dream crazy dreams of this and that,
Of better days and better states,
Thinking the world a thing it never was
And wishing that they were not what they are.

Yet if they dream that man is different than he is
Or life than it is,—
"Pure" or "good,"
Or that both harp and crown
Await them elsewhere
And that to vote
Will make men better
Well, then, what of that?
Their sons,—a few,
Make lawyers, judges, thieves or clowns.
Their daughters "queens" of this and that,—
The stage, the store, the "follies" or the home,
And fill the scene with others like themselves,—
The tramping ranks of others like themselves.

What more do you or I?

And do they must and will,—
"Dumb Dutch"
"And crazy, rolling Swede"
And "wild, contentious Mick"
And "ignorant, stubborn Yank"
Ploughing the land,
Sowing the grain
Driving the hopeless kine in herds to death
To slews of death
That we and they may "live."

OASIS

SABLE, subtle night—
And men
And women
Seeking forgetfulness
In love,
In mystery,
Anticipations,
Intrigue;
A perfumed garden
Where minds dance;
A wild, sensuous arabesque
To the flames of desire,
To the moanings of passion;
Or play
A wild obbligato
To the solo of the flesh,
In sophistication,
In illusion,
In abandon;
Where paradise is fashioned
From the gossamer of thought
Or fumes of blood,

And peopled
With undulating
Rhythmic
And desirable
Forms.

ALLEGORY

LET me but tell you
How it has been with me;
So you shall know.

In the dark of a cellar,
At the foot of a dank wall,
Beneath a webbed, forgotten window
Bereft of sun,
A rose,
The sucker of a rose,
So long,
So pale—
The seeking, crawling stem of one
That would know sun and light
And wind
And rain.

(The grass it never knew!
Nor sun!
Nor rain!)

It was a bud
That faced a crevice
Opening upon

An inner, darker world
Where was no light.
Yet into this it turned
Aseek,
All other ways being closed,
And grew
Into that lightless world
That held no life,
No hope.

Yet even so it grew
And sought,
And strove,
Put forth a sickly stem,
Put forth a sickly leaf,
Reached upward toward the dusky pane
In hope,
And pressed against it too,
Because,
Without,
Was light,
The sun,
The rain,
The grass;
And then,
Debarred,
Gave o'er the search
In death.

I tell you there is that
Should murder hope;

From which it should turn back
In fear,
Despair.

But no;
Against the certainty of death
I set my strength.
I toiled.
I dreamed.

Perverse?
Ah, no.
I never guessed.
I never knew—
Until
The end.

LIFE

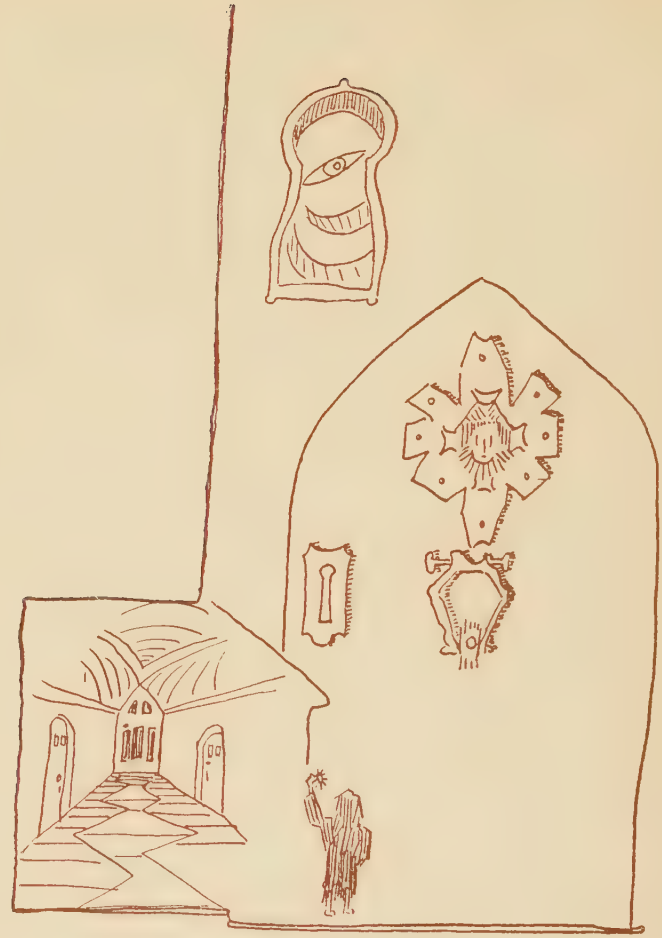
IT is so beautiful:
Its very end with a strange beauty blends
Into a sweeter, richer harmony.
The rains that fall athwart a gleaming sun,
The dark heart-moods that drive bright joy away,
A sense of climax,
Danger lurking near.

* * * * *

Oh, the black threads—
The blood-red skeins of fate;
Our very warp and woof,
Life's dearest contrast.

* * * * *

Who would be happy and there were no pain?



Little Keys

LITTLE KEYS

LITTLE keys
Little keys
That unlock the little doors
To little visions
Little delights—
That open them
To little pleasures
And little pains
That divine so little
Reveal so little
And yet here—
Beyond,
The great doors
And the great locks;
The giant doors
And the giant locks
That the little keys
Will not unlock.

BLACK POOLS

LONELY marsh pools.
Undiscovered tarns.
Unremembered tarns.
That here
In this forgotten place
This drear and rain-swept moor
Turn empty leaden faces
Toward
A heavy, leaden sky
The while
Drop on drop
Falls
The autumn rain
The sombre winter rain
Wanly.
Sadly.
The while
On distant deserts
Burn
The parched and imploring sands.

THE YOUNG GOD

THE young god.
The kind god.
He brings the spring.
He gives the rain.
He wills sweet gifts.
In the grass,
Beside the placid stream
He lies
And dreams
The young god.
The kind god.

The young god.
The kind god.
He walks the fields.
He loafs beneath the trees.
He wills sweet gifts,—
The painted fruit.
The golden grain.
He answers prayer
But wills not pain
The young god.
The kind god.

Oh, ask for rain
And it will fall.
Oh, pray for sun
'Twill blaze at dawn.
The young god.
The kind god.

In the flick of rain that ends the storm.
In the mutter of the thunder to the south
In the wind that shakes the grain
And the leaves,—
The young god.
The kind god.

His the song of the bird in the tree.
His the light of the sun on the hill.
In the long grass that is gold
And that bends and sways,
He lies,—

The young god.
The kind god.
Who walks the fields
And wills sweet gifts.

THE PRISONER

HOW well I have succeeded in concealing the
ill that is mine
The innocence of the world attests.
I have always so succeeded.
Nevertheless,
Chained in the deepest dungeon of my soul,
It speaks.
I can hear its sighs, its groans.
And there,
In spite of me,
At times
I must go.—
I cannot avoid it—
Into that darkness,
And with how flaring and smoky a torch of
memory!
And oh, the thing that I see!
The thing that I see !!!
The eyes!
The wasted bones!
The wasted heart!
The wasted soul!

* * * * *

But oh, my prisoner! My prisoner!
It is not you but I who am tortured!
Not you but I who am sick!
Not you but I who must die!
Not you but I—
I!

ALL IN ALL

GOD
To my astonishment
Is shining my shoes.
He has taken the form,
In part,
Of an Italian shoe black
Who is eager to earn a dime.
And, again,
He is preaching some of his own qualities
And virtues
From a most inartistic pulpit
In the guise of a minister who,
A little befuddled,
And dull,
Does not entirely,
Believe in himself
Or his import.
Again
He is killing His wife
Having wearied of her,
Is flirting with a girl,—
Another phase of Himself,—
With whom He would enjoy
Carnal contact.

Reading a newspaper
To learn of Himself
I presume;
Driving a truck,
Lending money at ten per cent,
Getting drunk,
Eating a ham sandwich,
In order to maintain His strength.
A most varied
Restless
Changeful
Moody
God
Who does not seem to know
Quite
What He wants;
Who has all power
And all wisdom,
Yet kicks His heels at a street corner be-
times,
Idle,
And scarcely knowing
Which way to turn,
Or how
To get His next meal.

THE DANCER

LARGE, languorous, drooping beauty;
Bland, amorous flesh that turns and sways
and sighs.
Pearl-powdered arms, pink, naked, extended,
And eyes like pools of yearning,
Eyes deep and yet ashamed.

* * * * *

And the rhythmic body sways and swings in
rhythm—
Approaches and recedes;
And the hands cling softly, sensually,
And the heart thrills and faints.

* * * * *

Minutes of swaying dream—
Minutes of fathomless delight.

THE VICTIM SPEAKS

TO lose a hand,
Or an eye,
Or a leg;
Or to be born
Ill-favored—
That is it.
All else is forgivable.
For look at me:
As a boy, in a railroad accident,
I lost a hand,
And though before
And since
I was and am
Moral,
Honest,
Intelligent,
Even energetic—
Those things so honored of the lips of life—
Yet, hearken:
Having lost a hand,
It is the same with me,
Or worse,
As though I had been a drunkard,

Or stolen,
Or had a dozen
Illegitimate children.
For I could not be more shunned—
Shied at.
Without my hand,
All men withdraw from me,
As though they feared contagion,
As though,
Somehow,
One came by a lost hand
Through sin
Or shame.

* * * * *

Not freedom from all crime, my brothers,
Nor honesty,
Not virtue,
But wholeness—
That is the great virtue.
All else—
Even ignorance
And poverty—
Is forgivable.

OH, LITTLE FLAME

EACH
A little flame
That burns brighter or dimmer,
Bluer,
Yellower,
Redder,
According to the draughts of circumstance.
Each
Rising or sinking,
Flaring,
Or failing continually—
Yet remaining constant
After a fashion;
Each to itself,
In itself—
One single,
Separate
Flame,
Flickering ruefully,
Or gaily
In so dim a world.
And yet each
To be blown out at last
By swift and bitter winds;

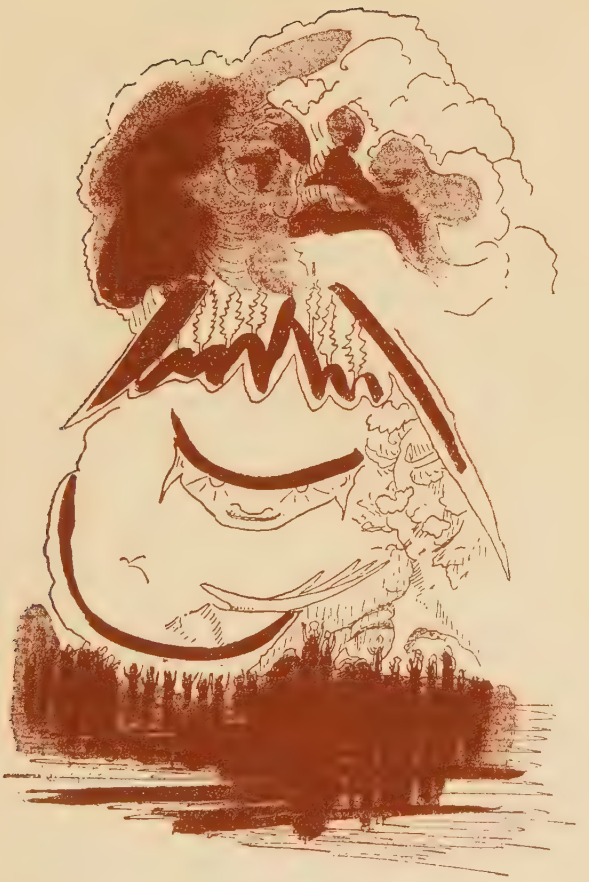
Or to flicker to an end
For want of oil,
Or care.

. . . .

Oh, little flame
Lit by circumstance
And ended by circumstance,
Yet seeking betimes
To light,
To fire
An entire world.

THE ENSORCELLOR

THE dark forest is mine
And my blood-tree,
At the foot of which, daily,
I sacrifice a slave,
That his blood
May water its roots.
And I have peace
And plenty.
For I am a great chief;
And the spells I weave
With tigers' teeth,
And the feathers of eagles,
And my father's bones,
And saliva,
And the parings of nails,
And dead flesh
Of dead men,
Protect me from all harm
And reveal to me
My enemies.
Yet there is one I cannot find,
Try as I may,
Sacrifice as I may.



The Ensorcellor

For,
Though I have slain hundreds,
Thinking each was he,
And incanted often,
Killing as I did—
Yet still I change.
Suns come and go
And the rains fall.
Yet there is this about me
That I note:
Through many, many days
My strength is less,
My hair more grey,
My skill less great.
And there is this about the one
Who thus bewitches me:
He works not with quick poison, spear or arrow,
But some deadly spell,
The art of which I know not,
So that slowly, slowly
It devours me.
Years since, my hands were smooth,
My face.
The mirroring waters
Of the streams
No mark showed they of change,
Yet see.
Some poison that I eat,
Some fetich he has brewed,
Some prayer he prays,
Does this to me—

Has done—
Is doing.
And though I seek and seek,
And nine wives have I slain,
And an hundred slaves,
And many men of craft,
Thinking to trap him—
Yet still I change
And grow each day more weak
And dull.
My steps are less,
My strength is gone.
I fear the young men of my clan,
The strength toward which they grow
As mine recedes.

If I could guess—
If I but knew—
How swift would be his fall!
How terrible his end—
How terrible!

THE GREATER SEA

THE greater sea!
The greater sea!
Not of whales and water
But of space,
In which O, vaster things
Than ever we
In all our wildest frenzies
Ever sensed
Do move—
Bodies of suns and worlds unknown,
Minds,
Forces,
Huge forms
And vessels
Passing with a roar
Which yet is silence;
Genii
With thoughts for eyes,
And rhymes for voices.

But these
Our little estuaries
Wherein
Or whereby
We dwell!

Our little fritterings
Of thought!
Of mood!
Beside our little shores!
Of "Life!"
The dullard tides
That come and go,
And come again,
Century upon century,
Time upon time,
Without end!
And yet,
Beyond,
The greater deep!
The greater sea!
Vast arcs of flight!
To strangeness,
Newness,
Flown by these
That are not seen,
Their roars not heard.

Oh, smothered here,
Eating each other's lives,
Throttled in the mud
Of our dull dreams,
Panting for mystery,
Mourning for that which does not come,
Our little souls awry,
We wait—we wait.
The while, without,

Beyond,
Is this,
This greater sea,
Its gush and thrash of waters,
The soaking of its salt and gold.

Yet wondering,
Dreaming,
Here we wait,
Our souls but pensive memories—
Decaying memories—
Haunted memories
No less
Of blessedness,
Of past delights,
That were
And now do mock
Our greater need.

HOST AND GUESTS

THE hunger for
And the dreams of
That—
That is to be.
The yelp of desire
The urge and vigor
Of youth and want
That dream strong dreams.

A road that is smooth,
Where that,
Which now is trod,
Is thorny.
Mansions spacious and inviting
As against
A warren of meagreness and dust;
Heart's ease
As against
Heart hunger.
Open doors as against closed ones.
Feasts—
And garnitures of beauty
As against
Want
And rags

Yet approaching steadily,
Unavoidably,
Feasts
As against hungers;
Garments of delight
As against rags.
Love
And the open door of contentment
As against heartache,
Contempt,
Indifference..

But who is he
Who is host
To this argosy
This freight of pleasure and salvation
Whose eyes look forward with indifference
to its coming?
Whose heart looks back with hunger
To want
And the dreams
Of that
That was to be.

THE DREAMER

I SIT and nod in the sun.
I am he who, exhausted by the savage contests of this world,
Has taken refuge in a world of dreams.
Life has disappointed me.
Its sounding pleasures sound no more.
I hear only the lap and the whisper of the waves of another shore.
My psychic pendulum now swings to where the greater pleasures are—
Sleep, sleep,
And dream,
And sleep,
And rest and sleep,
And dream.
I sit and nod in the sun.
I dream, and dream, and dream,
And sleep.

The Dreamer

DIRGE—WINTER

THAT within me
That gave life its savor,—
To each day its gold,
Is dead,—
Dead.
Blasted.
I cannot soar.
I cannot dream.

That is why
The gold, brown and red leaves of the trees
Now falling
Weigh upon my spirit
Like the thoughts of death
In youth.
A sense of futility
As of nothing fulfilled.
A sense of failure
As of nothing accomplished
As dreamed.
And my soul droops
As this vine
In winter.

Spring—Hope.
Summer—Laughter.
Fall—Heartache.
Winter—Memories.

For hope has not been fulfilled.
Nor any of my dreams.
And the sun
Which rises with such splendor
Each day
As of old
Alone keeps breathing
The illusion
Of life,—
Not hope.

Outside my window
A wistaria vine
Is shedding its leaves
Of yellow.
Its long naked length,
Its leaves and blossoms, fallen,
Is like an exposed soul,
My soul,
Sad,
Dull colored,
Stripped of its gladness
Of leaves
And flowers.

For my soul
Like this vine

In the springtime of life
Was glamorous
With blossoms
And leaves,
The blossoms
And leaves
Of my youth
And my dreams.

But now the birds of desire and love
May come
And they will,
But they will come
In vain.
For the green and purple foliage that was,—
The green and purple foliage
Of my youth and dreams
Has fallen,
Gone;
And they will seek in vain.
In vain—
The promised shelter.
The nesting nooks
That once upon a time
In Spring
Awaited them
In me.

ZITHER—SPRING

LITTLE bells.
Tinkling bells.
Like tiny, bursting bubbles of glass,
Piercing the ears
As with showers
Of tiny lances.
Painting
A luminescent pool
Of sound,
Of light,
Of mirth,
Of pearl
And silver.
And making the heart to beat jubilantly.
Or checking it
Dolorously.
Closing the throat
As by a hand
With a throb of rapture.
Or of pain
Gripping the throat
As by a hand,
With infinite sorrow:
With infinite delight.

A WINE OF BITTERNESS

THE passion
That may not find expression through my body
Rises like fumes to the mind
And distills as visions,—
The very essence
And substance
Of my dreams
And needs.

Women,—
Since I need them so,—
Have become different,
More essential,
More desirable,
More perfect
Than anything in nature.
Yes,
By reason of this yearning
And this distillation,
Everything in nature
Now tends to suggest
And express them

And the need,
The hunger,
That is mine.

There is an orchard below the barn of this house.
And the trees,—
Their arms,—
Are like the arms of women,
Lovely
And sinuous
And extended,—
To me.
And their leaves
Are like hair,—
Their hair,—
Parted above blue openings
That are their eyes.
They dream
And plead.

Even apples,
Rosy on their twigs
Are round
Like the breasts of women
And the contours
Of hills
And fields,
The shore-line of a bay
Or lake
Or stream,
Its windings

Are become
By transmutation
The languorous,
The sensual,
The lovely
Forms of women,—
Their breasts,
Their necks,
Their arms,
Their lips,
Their thighs,
And speak
To me
Who am already torn
Of Life's great mood and wish,—
Of mine.

The very clouds on high
That form, dissolve, reform,
But show them smiling,
Posturing,
Reaching unto me
Who am already weary
Of my need.

Oh, yes,
This passion
That distraits and tortures me,
Does thus
By fumes,

Transmute itself to fact
Until
As substance in the earth and sky,
It mocks me with a beauty
That I may not claim.

LITTLE MOONLIGHT THINGS OF SONG

LITTLE moonlight things of song—
Little pools of dream and beauty in youth and maidenhood.
Sweet, sweet minor ballads and arias.

* * * * *

A realm between a mansion and river—
An ever-blue sky and a rare garden—
Great, cool patches of wooded beauty—
A fountain and a statue—
Moss roses and stone benches—
Magnolia trees, crape-myrtle and fronds of palms—
The flash of a scarlet wing in a thicket of jasmine.
And then—
Men and women, perfect, perfect,—
And love that never, never dies.

* * * * *

Little pools of dream in youth and maidenhood.
Little moonlight things of song.
Sweet, sweet minor ballads and arias.

THE VICTOR

SO, at last your beauty's mine.
Take from your arms the furs,
and from your neck the pearls,
and these soft silks
diaphanous and gold.
Now you stand glowing in the light
that falls upon your hair.
The smile and breast that wounded him who won you not
now travail me, who did.
(We two shall ease us of this flame.)
Yet, linger so
and fix me with that mystic look so witless of its power.
Scent of your hair!
The color of your cheeks shines back,
reflected in the glass.
Youth speaks in you,
the mystery of lust that satisfies this pain.
I lie and beckon to your shining eyes.

* * * * *

Shall there be fears, vague memories?
There was another? Be it so!
Let him now dream of that which troubles me,
while we writhe here together.

Beauty must slay whether it's won or lost.
By wounds alone, is beauty grown.
The heart bled deep with beauty
by grinding discontent
to victory vaults, and finds its victory hollow.
All wounds are jewels, and jewels wounds.
Sad Christ,
did He not testify?

* * * * *

But rest.
The violet dusk knows naught of this,
nor those who plod while here we play unseen.
No cold touch of eternities comes here.
A little fire hot against the dark,
a little happiness against all those who died unhappy,
victors in love and life are we.

* * * * *

Yet stay.
What link are we in the unending chain
This night shall prove!

* * * * *

Come now, arms wide!
Let ages fly and fade,
and cold stars glitter
In this our warm embrace.
We two
we two
hold all the world—

A FLOWER SPEAKS

IN other years
Were sun
And warmth
And rain,
And gentle, strengthening winds.
But with my days
Came cold,
And then the heat—
The drouth,
And hot
And searing winds.
So that I pined—
Shriveled,
Grew but thinly,
Worn by the strain,
The endless contest.
And then
A cut-worm,
Driven by heat and need,
Gnawed at my roots,
So that
The feeble blooms I uttered,
Belated,
Pale,
Hung limp and colorless.

And then came mite and midge,
And larvæ of fierce flies,
To eat
And gnaw;
So that I stood,
At last,
A withered, wizened thing,
Unpleasant to the eye,
All gaunt,
And colorless.

And then came early fall
With nipping, piercing frosts,
So that I browned and crimped,
A leafless, faded stalk,
The glorious thing I might have been
Filched by the mood of life.

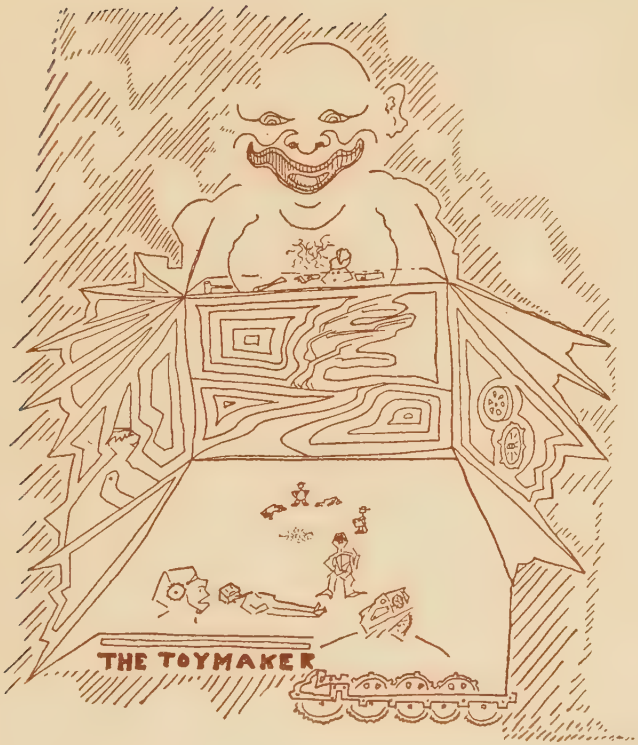
THE TOYMAKER

YOU will be interested
You will be amused
For I have devised
A most surprising
A most engaging
Toy,
And game.

The principle of my toy
Is very simple.
I have fitted together
Many parts
Which make for motion,
Awkward
And yet easy.
And I have developed a chemism
For a tank within,
Which makes it go.

Oh, I laugh
And laugh.

For this chemism
Which I have devised


THE TOYMAKER

And which makes it go,
Requires yet another
Which this first must have
To keep it going,
And which it must seek.
Its complement
And yet
Of which
I do not provide
Enough.
Do you see?
There is a door,
Through which
It may feed itself.
And the oddity of the toy,—
The oddity of the amusement
Lies in the contest
That must follow.

For I put my toys
Upon the floor.
And in the center
The food,
The chemism,
The little grains
Which each must seek
Must have.
And after each contest,
Will you believe,
The floor is thickly strewn
With broken

Or with injured toys.
They struggle so.

The oddity of it.
The humor of it.
I laugh
And laugh.

DIFFERENCES

OUT of the kitchen door
And down the hill
And into my thicket
Of fragrant willows
And elders.

A glistening green fly
Lights upon a twig
And examines
With care
A dyad of dust.
And beside this agate pool
A frog
Now lurks for a fly
And a snake
For a frog.
And upon its surface
A score of water skippers
Spin and zig-zag
Making rings
And squares.

How still.
How pale the green shadows of the willows.

The gnarled and twisted branches of these trees
That are like arms
And yet not like the arms
And hands of men and women
That to me
Among my pots and pans
Do but constrain.

Differences.
A sense of solitude
As against multiplicity
Individuality
Unlikeness
As against
Otherness
And wrought out of difference.
I am not a frog
And am not pursued by a snake.
I am not a fly
Lurked for
By a frog.
I am not a dyad of dust
To be surveyed
By a fly.
Differences.
And hence
Peace.
But, oh, the gift
Of even this.

A wagon passes on the distant road.
An idler tramps the path beside it.

A catbird calls.
Save for these
And the wind
And a falling twig
No sound.

Out of the kitchen door
And down the hill
And into my thicket
Where by differences
I am shielded
From the irritations
And the miseries
Of a world
That I disdain.

IN A COUNTRY GRAVEYARD

THE wind
In the trees
Above the graves of these "dead"
Sings and sighs,—
The graves of boys and girls
Of "old" boys and "old" girls
And babies
Who "died"
Too young
To know "Life."

Yet high in the blue
A strong hawk
Not being "dead"
Sails.
And in this adjoining field
These cream-colored oxen
Of Virgilian beauty
Munch and move.
A sun
That is not "dead"
Irradiates this light and warmth
And tonight a moon
That is not "dead"

Will winsomely pallor
The shadowed earth.
These trees
That are not "dead"
Break the warm light
And these flowers
Not being "dead"
Proclaim a Circe beauty
Gay and strong.
And grass
That is not "dead"
Waves and trembles.

Energy,
Color,
Form,
Tone,
Mingle and make "Life"—
Not "death."
How strange this word upon these
stones
That says of these
That they are "dead."

IT

AN army of evil powers that lash you on,
a stored-up mass of "knowledge" confusing
your own seeking.
You stumble and may fall.
What is that to It?
Its iron grip of desire claws your vitals,
Its passions blaze in you and drive you on.
You are Its fuel.
Into the fire, and forget,
or thank It for honoring you
to sweat and groan and die,
in Its behalf.

'TIS THUS YOU TORTURE ME

'TIS thus,
'Tis thus,
You torture me.

For now it is a moon hung low
Above a tower in spring,—
Your moon.
Your spring.

And now
Those dancers there,
Sinuously weaving in and out among themselves
Under bright lanterns,—
Your dancers
And
Your lanterns.

And now
Because some lads of yours
Are telling tales about a fire at dusk,—
Your fire.
Your dusk.

I sigh
Because of youth
That went so long ago.
Your sigh.
Your youth.
Your long ago.

And now
From whence I know not
Comes a train,
So bright,
So swift,
So fair,—
Your train.
Your bright.
Your swift.
Your fair.

And now
'Tis gone again.
Your "now"
And your "again."

And now your stars stand out
Against the depths of time and space
Your stars.
Your time.
Your depths.
Your space.
So New.
So old.

And now a bit of song that sings itself
Sings this:

That you,—
That you,
Shall stay
And sing
And be
When I,
When I,
Am never more.

ACQUAINTANCES

IT is with sensations alone
That I am concerned;
Not their cause.
The cause!
The cause!
One may search in vain for that.
But you,—Pleasure
And you,—Pain,
I know you both,—
And well.
You need not be explained.
To me
Of God,
Of devil,
You explain yourselves,—
You, Pleasure,
That I love
And you, Pain,
That I fear.

LOVE PLAINT

I HAVE sought to fetter love,—
To bind it.
But love is like the wind
Stirring in the tall grass at night
Under great trees
In the dark.
It may not be seen
Or fettered
But only felt.
Or,
Again,
Love is like a distant voice
On sea or land,
In fog or storm
That calls and calls
And speaks of need.
A sweet voice that would give.
Or love is like a perfume
That the wind brings
But that one cannot place
Or know,—
A rumor of old things that were
Or yet may be
Or are,
But that one may not hold.

It dwells where shadow is
And song
And dream,
And sings
Or weeps
Or calls
And oh, the ache
Of that elusive call.

But I,—
I sought to bind love
And it fled.
And now the searing day has come,—
The blare and crash of life,—
The long hot day of want—
And now the grit and dust
Of life's hard, thundering wheels
Are on my lips
And in my eyes
Inflamed and yet made tender
By Love's lips.

THE CREATOR

I DO not want people any more;
I do not need them.
I have had enough of people—
Old,
Young,
Strange,
Commonplace,
For out of my own imagination,—
My own will to create,—
I can and do invent people;
Friends.
Enemies,
Slaves,
Kings,
Poets,
Fools,
To whom I can talk.
For I have lived too long.
I know the spirits of men
And of women,—
Their compulsions.
Their necessities.
Among these that I create
I move more freely.
I am not embarrassed

By their compulsions
Which are so much like my own.

I do not want friends any more;
I do not need them.
What I want,
Most of all,
Are these people of my own
Among whom I can walk
As a master among servants,—
A king among slaves.
As a friend among friends
Or as an enemy among enemies.
And I choose—
I may praise,
Or blame,
Scold,
Or harangue
With authority,
Condescension,
Love,
Hate.

I do not want people any more;
I do not need them.

I am become a god
Who creates
And evanishes
His creations
Time without end.

SO WEARY I

THE "miracles of science,"
The "wonders of civilization."
"Progress,"
"Culture,"
The "Divine, far-off event
"To which
"The whole creation moves"—
What have they done for me?

Better an egoist
Who dreams his dreams;
A harvester of happy days,
A raveller
Of the golden cloth
Of life;
One who
In the sun of peace
Takes his life
And thinning it to shreds,
Surveys each shining strand,
Floats it in wisps
Upon the air of nothingness,
Reliving the great things
He might have been
Or done.

MIRAGE

IN those dark days you were not,
Not at all.
But in the depths of a green wood in spring,
And by a rill,
And through the young, green arches of the trees,
I heard a bird sing—
(Oh, that song!)
And from the west fell slanting rays of gold,
And from beyond that distant, rounded hill
There called a speeding train,
And from a valley where were cows agraze
I heard the tinkle of their bells.
And flower scents blew,
And dreams.
And then I knew of you—
That you would come—
That some day, out of this,
Your soul would rise—
Yourself—
An exhalation,
Emanation,
Gift,
To beckon from afar,
To take my seeking hand.

LOVE

I AM but a spoonful of honey
Distilled
From the hearts
Of passionate flowers—
Sweet!
Sweet!
I am but a goblet of wine
Of rare good wine
Spiced with delightful spices
Which
If you drink
Ho!!
Madness!!!
I am the perfume
Of a mad,
Dark
Sensuous bloom
That opens at midnight
To breathe passion
And lethargy
And dreams
Upon the world.

RAIN

WET tree-trunks,
Black after a rain,
And those grey racing clouds
That mutter to the south.
And these green dripping leaves,
Aglitter with their jewels
Against a level sun.

Who speaks of good,
And counts not this?
Or boasts of life,
And counts not this?
Who cries of ill,
And counts not this?
Who?

THE ABYSS

FALLING from a great height,
Plunging into an abyss
Of sleep, sleep!
At last the psychic tension broken,
That something of built-up cultural repression
giving way
To something that is below it—
I sleep, sleep, sleep.
And though all life seethes,
And universes circle as spirals,
And clouds of suns spin like flies—
I sleep, sleep, sleep.
I sleep, sleep, sleep.
I sleep.

THE NEVER RESTING

EVERYWHERE forces, elements,
Combinations, capacities,
But graded, arranged and harmonized,
Balanced for secret reasons, perhaps:
Supply to need, at times;
Reward to merit, at times;
Utility to hope, perhaps,
And perhaps, not.

What if a plan miscarry?
The endless other plans for the mere thinking.
The being all in all.
The never dying, never resting, always dreaming.
And beauty:
Beauty you cannot escape,
Beauty you do not wish to flee,
Beauty, that you are.

THE BEAUTIFUL

THEY think it easy to be a woman,—
To love
And be loved,
But I know better.
Again and again
I tell you
I know.
I understand.

I know about her
Because
She has crossed my path.
I know her struggles
And her defeats.
It is because of her defeats
That she is
To me
The lovely one.
For out of her defeats
Has been born
A new quality
In woman.

I have no name for that
But,
I have a name for her.
I call her
Beautiful.
I have made up the name
Because
Before it
And before the thing in her
That it represents,
My own vile body
And my weary soul
Bow,
And bow reverently.
She is
To me
The quality of being strong to be loved,—
Of needing
And being capable of
Complete
And ceaseless
And insatiable
And yet generous
Love.
Of loving fatefully.
And yet
Not destroying
But healing,—
Building.

It is the one thing

So many men
Need from women,—
And that
They do not find.

EGO

IT saves me from regret that I have neither
home nor friends.
The squalor of the streets I tread—it irks me not.
I pace them nimbused in my own beauty.
My tenement row and room, they are not shabby,
since they hold me.
I may look in the cracked surface of my washstand
mirror
and behold, myself:
my beauty face to face.
I smile, frown, pout, laugh,
seeing always beauty.
When I walk out, frank admiration flashing on me
salves my poverty.
The hurrying stranger, the rich man in his car,
the clerk, the grocer's boy, the policeman on the
street,
are my outriders and attendants,
acolytes all.
Before me, their eyes reflect my glory.
They swing the censer of my praise.
They show me anew what my mirror says.

It is the better part of what I am that I see and
show.
Spirit Narcissine,
beauty untarnished,
glow that youth alone can give!

LAMENT

COMES dusk,
The ground before me black for lack of light;
But west the sky is livid,
In the east
A velvet drapery,
Whereto is pinned the moon
That follows now the sun.

And now
The springtime in my soul.
All the old,
The avid aches and needs
Of youth
And unrequited love
Asurge,
I walk,
And sigh,
And sigh.

Oh, hours when
(Such hours as these)
Love should have spoken,
Did not—
Passion, too,

That should have torn my flesh
But never, never did.

And so I stand,
The lustre of this moon upon my face,
This sun and moon conspiring odours, tones,
My mother earth aswoon,
Yet empty quite of heart and hand,
The substance of my dreams
Forever vanished;
Yet not this yearning,
Nor yet this youth of mind,
Nor heart.

I am a spirit now that stalks the world,
A seeking,
A hungry ghost,
That tracks its dreams,
Its eyes aglow,
A beggar light within,
Its hands quite empty,
A burning thirst for life that will not die.

You sun—
You moon—
And you, my mother earth—
Make answer.
I am of you,
A thing that claws and claws,
And tears forever
Its unwithered heart.

THE WRAITH

DOWN the stairs of sleep,
Of dream,
Into the valley of the past,—
Beside the shores
Of the sea
Of forgetfulness.

Moonlight
In melting waves
A country street,
A country lane
Half hidden
Beneath dark trees.
A lamp that burns and gleams.
A gleam that lights a window
By night
In the gloom
Of the springtime
Of youth
And love.

Oh, hours
That could evoke wild fancies.
Oh, inexpressible days
And dreams.

Full of the fire
And the zest
Of youth.
Oh, longings that tortured
And made glorious youth.

And little hands
Now lift above a hedge
And silver feet now run
In joy.

And the eyes are wet,
And the heart sore
Because of a dream
Revisioned
In a dream.

THE FURRED AND FEATHERY

OH, furred and feathery and scaly,
Bright, dreamful, unimagined spirits of still
far places,
The jungles,
The snows,
The seas.
Swift creatures of the air,
The grasses,
Prowling,
Ploughing,
Flashing,
Listening,
Peeking,
Turning,
Seeking.
Bright, nervous mechanisms,
Atuned to the stir of other mechanisms,
To fly,
To halt,
To contest,
And to win
Or die.
Keen creatures of a dream,
And of desire,

And ever hungry,
Peeking,
Perking,
Stalking
The jungles,
The snows,
The seas.

TO LOVELINESS

HONOR that spirit in man
That, in the face of shame
And failure,
Still dreams of better things.
Give honor unto him
Who, in the midst of doubt
And endless dissipations,
Still, still can dream
And still build temples—
Not to Christ,
Or Buddha,
But to beauty—
The human will to loveliness:—
That in temples
Poems
Songs of love
All forms and thoughts
Of art
Still seeks
To speak of beauty,
Its honor.

The dead hand of the past—
It falters here

The drift and weight of years
But serve to gild
And glorify.
Avaunt, you vaults for prayers
And wailing.
Blind fate
May strip and plunder all.
But this—
This spark
This inward urge,
This will to loveliness—
To sing and picture beauty
It will not,
Cannot
Die.

THE SYMBOL

SO you are dead,
Mine enemy,
And I
Who view your frozen soul,
Grieve.
For in your end
I see
That I must die,
Mine enemy.
I grieve for life—
For mine own life—
That so must end,
Oh, enemy,
As yours
Has ended here.

* * * *

And yet,
In this, your very end,
Oh, enemy,
Is balm—
This balm:
That that which threatened me
Through you,
That prowling life
In you

. . . . . The Symbol . . . . . .

That threatened me,
Is done;
And I,
That still am here,
Can smile
That life is left—
This gay and sharping life—
That now no more,
Nor eyes,
Nor taste,
Nor strength,
Of you,
Oh, enemy,
That loved it so,
May know.

* * * *

And yet,
Oh, enemy,
The while I smile
I sigh.
And while I sigh
I smile,
Mine enemy,
For this:
That you,
That spelled my end
In hate,
Do spell mine end
In truth,
Oh, enemy—
Mine enemy.

EXHORTATION

IF the mother die,
What of it?
If the father perish,
What of him?
Tear lover from sweetheart—
Fill the earth with unrest—
Make great the need for pleasure,
And thwart that.
Hang frozen grapes
Above the sweating tongue
Of Tantalus.
Put Lazarus,
With all his sores,
At Dives' feet,
And Dives' self in hell,
Pleading
With the comforted Lazarus
For a drop of water.
Confuse a Buddha,
Or a Christ,
With the miseries
They cannot help
Or heal—
Then set them up

And say
How God-like
And how kind,
Now pray to these

Who does this?
And why?
And why not
Pray—
To Him?

THE PILGRIM

THE love I bear you
Is destroying,—
A canker
That eats at my heart.

And yet
It is
The most perfect thing
That I possess,—
A treasure
The value of which
Is beyond measuring.

There is
Within your spirit,—
The little flame that is you,—
The light
That lights for me
This otherwise dark way
Along which I fumble
And fail.
When all is well between us
All is well, indeed.
But when you are unhappy,

Or I
Because of you,
But most so when 'tis I
Who make you so
'Tis then my spirit sinks
To a dark and rainy land
Where only misery
And unrest
Abide.

Oh you may never know.

For then my heart mourns deeply.
And forth from it
There goes
Into the shadow
That is not life
But time
Into the silence
That is space
Its shadow,
Its wraith,
The ghost of its own sorrow
That must pilgrimage
To where'er you are
Your heart
Its grail.
And it must find you, too,
Where'er you are
And whimper at your door
That you may open to it
And understand.

Oh,
Have you not heard?
Do you not know?
Do you not feel?
That without,
Ragged,
Footsore,
Hungry
Is love,—
This wraith of my misery,—
That waits
And calls
And would be
Let in
To you.

NEPENTHE

INCOMPARABLE moments!
Intense moments—
Tragic moments!
How few!

Once in a life a sunset in love.
Once in a life
A blazing passion—
A sickness—
A hate—
Once,
And once only.
A vision from a mountain top, maybe;
Divine music;
A terrible line
Of poetry;
A great courage,
Revealing our own failure;
A great loss,
Our own gain;
Once and only once a bird song
In storm and shine at once.

Incomparable moments!
Intense moments—
Tragic moments!
How few!

THE SACRIFICED AND SUFFERING

THE suffering
And the sacrificed—
Their needs
Their dreams
They who march so silently
So voicelessly
The while the ambitious
The strong
The unkind
The indifferent
Seize upon their substance
And build of it
Their own fames and dreams.

THE SPELL

THERE is a new moon
And the fields,
Bathed by this vague radiance
Are dimly plain.
Along the road
That leads back to his home
And mine
Are clumps of trees
That are like smoke
Or clouds
Fringing the road.
And these frogs,—
How they drum.
And these tree-toads,—
How they chirp!
Oh,
Their chirps are like knife-stabs—
Now.

And why?
Because I am alone.
And he has been cruel,—
Bitter cruel.

Those curses.
His indifference.
My homeless need
Of his love.

* * * *

And I have sworn
Never to endure again
Another curse,—
Another wound.

And yet
This shadow.
That feather moon.
These chirping frogs
That bring back
Not tonight
But other nights
And other days
Not like this.

* * * *

Oh, his eyes
Of yesterday.

The trees are like clouds
Along the road.
And I cannot hate.
I can only return wearily
And yearningly
Along this road.
For these toads
And this wind,

And this warmth
And this moon
Are stronger
Than am I.

Oh,
I cannot live
Without love.

THE GREAT BLOSSOM

DO the hours go by?
What are the hours?
I sit in my doorway
From dawn until sunrise,
From sunrise until noon,
From noon until night,
The bloom of the present moment,
The gorgeous life-bloom itself,
Forever before me.

Is there work that calls?

This world-flower
With its infinite variety and color
Calls also.
Birds sing.
Yonder rose
The sun,
Yonder silver flower
The moon,
Bloom
And glow,
By day,
By night,

And above all
This blue-bell petal,
The sky.

Am I reminded of the lapse of time?

To my great world-flower
There is no time.
And I may not be long to see.
My span is brief.
But my world-flower,—
It blooms
Forever.

I will sit in my doorway
And watch this great blossom,—
Its day-bloom,
Its night-bloom,
The golden sun-flower,
The silver moon-flower,
The violet stars.

PHANTASM

YOU—
Who haunt the house of my fancy
Who elude me
Are never to be found.

* * * * *

In the front room,
In the back,
On the stairs,
In the street,
In the yard, near the door.
Never caught
Though I hear—
Turn quickly.
Never seen, yet—
Pat, pat, pat
The boards creak,
A branch bends
But you—
You—
You are never seen.

* * * * *

Oh, not known—
Not seen.
There are rumors in me

Of what you are like;
How you do—
You—who elude me
Who haunt the house of my fancy.

THE VOYAGE

BEYOND the stern
The water ripples like silk,
Or splashes softly
Like oil
Or resin,—
Boundless silk,
Boundless oil
Boundless resin.
And at the horizon
Glide the black clouds
Of autumn.
And beyond these
The far reaches
Of darkness.

Is there a shore?
Was there ever one?

This little ship
Floats
Like a world in space.
This water
Is like black space.
Illimitable,

Mysterious,
Unescapable.
You dream into it
And
It raises thoughts
Of timeless,
Borderless
Space.
The whole world has melted into it,—
Has become liquid dark,
Oil,
In which we float,—
This ship,
This crew,
This company.

Incessantly,
Changelessly,
On and on,
We move
In a dumb and deserted void,—
In God.

THE GALLEY SLAVE

DRAGGING at a load of sheer stupidities
with ignorance as one's weight
and meekness as one's chains:
the end and reward for which one strives
not plain.

* * * * *

Does anything in space find comfort
in the ignorance and stupidity
of men?

REQUIEM

IS there not a south wind?
And is not the snow almost gone?
Through that east window
Pours the sunshine this day
Speaking of soft thaw winds
And nearly melted snow.

Yet now,
Now,
It matters not.
For last year
When they were here
I was thinking to have you under this roof.
Beside this fire here
Looking into this garden.
But now—
Now,—

Is it cold where you lie?
Is it cold?

It is not so cold as it is here.

The Hidden Gods.

THE HIDDEN GOD

I HAVE come to the place in my life
Where I must pray,—
Pray.
I find
That prayer
Is necessary
To me.
Yet I have known many gods,—
Many.
They have been bland,
Smiling,
Serene,
Commanding,
Demanding,
Usurious,
Cruel,
Frowning,
Unjust.
They have dreamed
Or beamed
Upon me,—
Been threatening
Or indifferent.
But they have all gone,—
All.

And there remains now
But the lumber
Of their paraphernalia,—
Crowns,
Robes,
Thrones,
Sceptres,
And they have aided me
Not at all.
Not at all.
And they are now covered with dust
And are in decay.
Yet I must pray,—
Pray.
And do.
I lift up my hands.
I kneel.
I seek in heart
Because I must,—
Must.
But of whom?
To whom?
Whom?

MOONLIGHT—MAY

RADIANT swirls,
Shimmering tentacles,
Luminescent, coruscating spirals,
Thickened silver,
Curdled radiance,
A rapture too great to be borne.

And now there open gates in basalt walls
High silver gates to white and silver halls
And in dance youth and love and life.

THE LITTLE HOME

MY little home,—
My little home!
Built of the wattle of illusion
And the tall reeds of fancy,
And thatched with the fronds
Of hope and faith.
And within,
The fire of belief,
The table of contentment,
And the bed of satisfaction.

And now see.

By the torch of your reason
And the sword of your understanding,
Have you broken its walls
And flamed its covering
So that open to the sky
And empty
It stands,—
Empty of faith
And content.
And I,—
I,—

Who within it dwelt
Warmly and at peace,—
In all your great universe
Where is no shelter,—
I stand bereft
And homeless,
Agape
And a-cold
In the immense void.

THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF LOVE AND WONDER

THE little flowers of love and wonder
That grow in the dark places
And between the giant rocks of chance
And the coarse winds of space.

* * * * *

The little flowers of love and wonder
That raise their heads
Beneath the dread rains
And against the chill frosts;
That peep and dream
In flaws of light
And amid the still grey places
And stony ways.

* * * * *

The little flowers of love and wonder
That peep and dream,
And quickly die.

* * * * *

The little flowers of love and wonder.

NIGHT VOICES

THE noises of the street,
The banging of doors,
The clatter of material life—
What are these?
Louder—
Louder
Are the knockings
Within the portals of my own soul—
This deepest, dissolvable self of me.
For there arise,
By night
As I lie
And think
And cannot sleep,
The miseries of mine ancient instincts,
The errors
Against which I
Least of all
Could have forefended,
I whom they most concern!
The thoughts of what might have been,
But now may never be!
Fortunes
That might have been,

And loves!
Visions!
Far scenes—
The wonders and fulnesses
Of a noble
And a great life,
That now can never be.

* * * * *

But see—
I turn and toss,
Fronting the night,
The noises of the street—
Yet louder, louder,
The knockings
And rumblings
Within the portals of my own soul.

TAKE HANDS

TAKE hands
And tell sad tales
One to another.

Has it filched from you your strength?
Your youth?
It has?
Has it robbed you of imagination?
Thwarted your dreams?
Withheld the fruits of hope?
The fruits of wit?
Of toil?
Of strength?
Of pain?
Has it blasted all
And left you chill,
Afraid,
Alone,
Yet facing still
A darker path
That must be trod
Alone?

Take hands with all who live
To left,
To right,
Or,
Make a gloomy choice of few
And with them sit
In some lone, sheltered place
Asking of each his story.
Or, better yet,
Or, best,
In silence sit
Hearkening the hopeless beat
Of each one's lonely heart
And wait,
Or dream,
Trusting a common misery to make soft
Or dull
The gorgon story
Of the human soul.

EGYPT

DUST that has been human fingers!
Water that has been eyes!
And this field,
A cornfield,
With an obelisk in the centre,
All that is left of a royal city.
And this river
That once supported millions and millions,
That bore her royal barque,
Passing these very fields,
Slaves fanning her—
And whom else?
And now the swart fellah,
Lean and hungry,
Scrapes a thin living from these fields,
Or idles,
Contemning a slavery
That yields him nothing.
And this river
Creeps and weeps to the sea,
Untenanted.

But the millions and millions!
The mummied dead

Who still lie, lost in thought,
Unchanged,
Eyes open,
Ornaments in place,
Perfumed,
Ready to rise
And cry:
"Ho, slave!—My bath!"
(The poor?
They could not pay to be so saved!)
And the great tombs, fallen;
The greater temples,
Wherein sad prayers wailed up
To sun and stars,
To a bull,
To thousand-breasted Ishtar,
To a snake,
To a crocodile,
To this mud river,
To a cat,
A beetle,
A toad.
And yet this muddy river,
This elder life all done,
Still seeps and creeps unto the sea,
Its millions gone.
The same crocodiles
Now contemned
And slain;
The same cats
And snakes

Abhorred;
The same beetles
Laughed at,
A great joke,
That people—
Legged men—
Should ever have reverenced
Or thought them gods.

THE WEAVER

THERE is, of course,
The world we see or "know."
"Apartments."
Factories.
Tall walls.
People going to business.
Forms.
Machinery.
Trains.
Trees.
The grass.
Cattle.
Flowers.
Clouds.
Beauty.
And then—
This other world.

Beneath.
Beyond.
Below.
Around.
Within.
A world in which—

Below the one we "see"
Or "know"
These things are dreamed, perhaps,—
Thought out.
Set forth
As by a weaver
Who, before a loom
With threads and patterns of his own,
Broods
Or dreams,
And weaves his dreams
Which are?
Which are?
Well, "*us*"
Or what
Through us
This weaver at his loom
Would do
Or be.

DAYS

DAYS,
Days,
Under clear skies,—
Under dark skies.
Days
Exposed to winds
From every quarter,
To sobs,
Trills
From every instrument.
Days
When accumulated disaster
Rolls over one
Like the thundering wheels
Of a conquering army,—
The floundering wheels
Of
A defeated one.
Days
That rise upon one
Faint,
Hushed,
Impalpable,
Tremulous

With the light
That is hidden
Within the lips
Of pearl.
Days
That spring like demons
Bony fingered
And gaunt,—
That dawn
Like disaster itself
And mutter
And curse
And gibber
Of ill
Or hatred.
Days
That are lions
And rip and wound.
Days
That are wood doves
Mourning,—
Mourning,—
Or skylarks
Singing.
Days
That soothe and heal.
Days that spin or flicker,
Make clear or confuse
Yet evanishing
In song
Or shadow

Never
Never
To return.

Days.
Days.
Days.

SUNS AND FLOWERS, AND RATS, AND KINGS

SUNS and flowers, and rats, and kings.
Armies and electrons.
Saints and microbes.
The bacillus of cholera.
The prayers and dreams of St. Francis.
A Shelley singing.
A Landru murdering his twenty wives.
Buddha
And
The Marquis de Sade.
A hundred
Thousand
Million
Murderers in their cells
Or abroad
And
A million martyrs and saints
Singing and praying
Nero, Mæcenas, Can Grande,
And this rheumy-eyed beggar at my door
Begging a dime.
And Orion

And
This rush-like flame
By which I write
And space
And this little ball
On which we spin.

Yet I ask and ask, and ask
I pray, by God,—
On my knees
I lift up my hands to know.
Yet you do not answer.
Or
You will not;
Or
You can not.
Yet now,
Now,
I implore you.
I call upon you aloud
Speak, speak!
Are you jesting?
Feigning?
Dreaming?
Raging?
Are you helpless
Like myself?
Do you know?
Plan?
Thrill?
Aspire?

Do you turn and toss?
Dream and wonder?
Do you hate?
Love?
Envy?
Rejoice?
Sigh?
Die, eventually?
Like myself?
Do you?

Oh, you substance of suns, and flowers, rats and
kings.

THE TIME-KEEPER

THRUM, thrum, thrum,
by night and day,
the mystery of it,
here, in my breast, and every other.
Salt, sodium, carbon,
in strange action and reaction,
in that narrow box, the heart.
Outside the world, the noises of the street,
stars overhead,
(thrum, thrum, thrum,)
people,
pathetic, seeking animals.

Perk as one will, pry like a rat,
with telescope and microscope,
deeper, deeper still,
thought, inspiration yield one nothing.
(Thrum, thrum, thrum.)
Only this pulse and movement,
only these waves that flash and change,
action and reaction within this narrow house,
this energy that quivers and repeats itself,
forever, its own step and time.
(Thrum, thrum, thrum.)

For whom? what?
Why?

YOUTH

OH, tree so tall, so tall,
Oh, star so solitary,
Oh, varnished pool,
Aglimmer in the dusk.

Now youth is,
And loneliness,
And that vague, unhappy-happy yearning
That seeks
And calls
And dreams
Of love.

THE BEAUTY

I WALK,
And all the ways are keener for my step.
I smile,
And those who see me, smile.
Like a lamp I glow,
And spread warm rays—
I, who never fashioned it,
Nor made the flame,
Nor yet the oil that feeds it.

ASIA

TO the drone of flutes
And the thrum of drums
And the fumes of opium and hashish,
It comes, it comes—
The infinite procession—
Huge Bactrian camels
That pad the sands,
Their heads bobbing;
And laden asses,
Weary in the heat
And slow;
And droves of sheep
And goats;
And fields of tents
A-shimmer in the sun
And dust;
And black-bearded men
And hooded women,
Pregnant
Or carrying their babes
(The infinite procession)
On their hips;
And youths like the Indian Bacchus,
With long curling hair;
And children of all ages,

Naked
Swart;
And old men,
Magnificent and fierce—
Passing, passing, passing—
The infinite procession.

* * * * *

All ages—
Ten thousand years—
A hundred thousand—
These fierce black faces,
And twisted, fretted thoughts,
And twisted, fluted columns,
And arabesques of stone,
And arabesques of jewels—
And arabesques of life,
A frieze inscribed against a rock,
Or the flow of shifting waters,
Rhythmical and fluent,
Radiant and sensual,
Marching, marching, marching,
Unchangingly and meaninglessly,
On.

* * * * *

Out of infinity,
And into it again,
To the squeal of flutes
And the drone of drums
And the drift of hours
And the fumes of opium
And of hashish.

MAGIC

THESE sounding streets—
Their color,
Their sense of life;
Their beauty, if you will—
They are of you—
You;
Not of themselves,
Nor of me,
But you.

* * * *

I walked with you—
I talked with you—
I saw them,
Through you.
You were the prism,
The stained glass,
The open window,
The great height,
From which I looked
And beheld
The wonderful.

* * * *

They are still here,
Close at hand;

But oh, how dead!
I dare not go to them.

* * * *

Oh, Abracadabra!
Phantasm!
Philtre!
Exorcism!
Cautery!—
Oh, ensorcellor! Ensorcellor!

INQUIRY

ARE flowers thoughts of yours, perhaps?
They are most lovely thoughts,
The loveliest of all your thoughts
And ways;
Of all your forms the best,
The most beautiful.

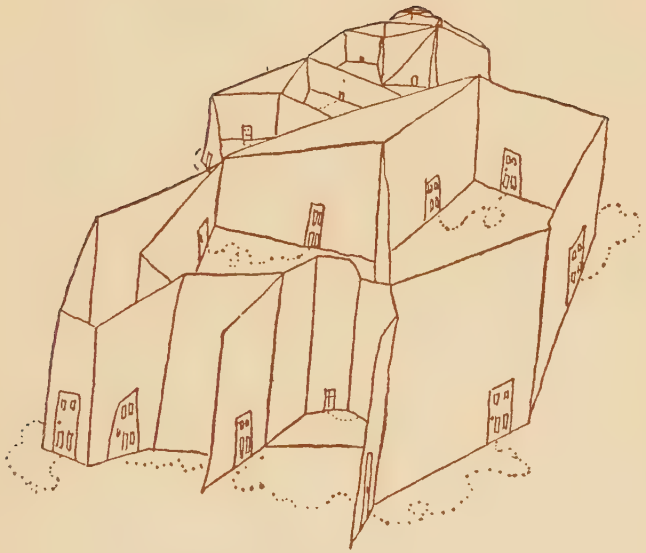
I LIE CONTENDING

IN the deeps of my own soul
They roar
And rage,
And the waves have not subsided
Ere the dawn breaks.
In the possession of rebellious wishes I toss,
In the grip of moods
And longings
That I dare not acknowledge.
I am like the inhabitant of a volcanic land
Who fears the thunder
And the rumble
Of the forces below.
I know their power,
The outcome
Of their giant strength.
By night I lie
In conflict with temptations,
Phantoms,
Reproaches
Which rise from the molten depths
Of my own soul.
I lie,
Fearsome,

Tentative,
Poised,
Ready to flee—
An urge within my own breast—
A cry
Within the depths
Of my own heart.

EMPTY ROOMS

WANDERING endlessly
Through innumerable rooms,
All of them empty
And without windows;
No sky—
No hope—
And only one door for entrance
And another for exit.
Doors closing automatically behind one,
But
I will not let myself expect
More of these rooms
Than is here
Or think of them
As other
Than that which they are—
Empty—
Or myself
As other
Than an automaton
Shunted colorlessly
From one to another
By a power that will not let me rest—
Or stay—



Empty Rooms

Nor will I believe
That the darkness
Into which I pass
Is different to that from which I entered
But cannot remember—
Nor will I look forward
Or back
With either hope or resentment
But endure—
Since I have not chosen so to wander—
In the emptiness
Of each and every room—
The sum total of astounding emptiness
That includes them all.

THE WANDERER

I CAN tell you how my life has been:
Sometimes on shipboard,
As you may have noticed,
The day
Or the night
Is bright,
Sparkling with sun
Or startling with stars;
And then,
From nowhere, as it were,
Like tendrils, like wisps,
Will rise the mists,
Creeping like ghosts about the sea,
Until, at a moment,
They are condensed
Into a thick,
A woolly fog,
That blots one's course
And quenches all.

* * * * *

So has it been with me.

* * * * *

The glory of the light is gone.
I see but fog before me,

And the dark.
I hear sad bells of warning,
But
The power to forefend
Is gone.

SHIMTU

HO!
Ho!
Behold me—
Gee-roc-wee—
Soothman—
Revealer—
And terror—
And safety—
Of my tribe.
On my coat
Pictures
Of birds and beasts.
On my hands
Bear claws.
On my head
The horns
Of the bison.
My wand covered
With the skins of small mice.
My feet
With that of
The bull.
Shimtu—

The Adder-God
Is my friend
And my guardian.
Shimtu, the Adder-God.

* * *

When he strikes,
I strike;
And when I strike,
It is he.
When I would do ill,
Or fight,
Or save my tribe,
I send for him,
Or send him—
His soul—
And he return not,
I die.
When I wish to know,
Or reveal,
I beat my drum,
Till,
As a bird, black,
An eagle,
Perching upon my roof,
He appears;
And then,
I swooning,
He enters,
And with my tongue
He speaks.

* * *

Great is Shimtu, the Adder-God,
But great am I,
Gee-roc-wee,
His soothman,
The savior of my tribe.
For when he speaks,
I speak.
And when he strikes,
It is I,
Gee-roc-wee,
In whom is Shimtu.
My strength,
And my shield,
Crawling,
Flying,
Walking—
Shimtu,
The Adder—
My God.

THE "BAD" HOUSE

FLARING, noisy taverns,
Babbling houses of bawds
And roysterers,
Who,
In the red hours of the night,
Thrill the dull flesh
With their screaming orgies
And pulsing, sweaty hungers;
While chiller passioned souls
Elsewhere dream pale dreams
Of better worlds and ways.

THE HELL POOL

HAVE you not seen?
Have you not guessed?
This tentacled sorrow?—
This inmost woe
That now,
Within,
Without,
My flesh
My soul
Encompasses—
Destroys?

It moves and shifts,
Dissolves and changes;
Gathers its force,
Its hate,
Its pain,
And whirls
And spins,
Within,
Without,
And back again.

And as it moves,
This living thing,

It pulses pain,
Despair.

Have you not seen its seal
Upon my face,
My brow?

* * *

Oh, could you look
Beyond these turbid pools,
My eyes,
And see
The seething hell of pain,
The raging hell of woe
In which
As in a sea,
I writhe,
I die.

HEAVEN

THE mountebank heaven that is to be—
Come and see.
Mountebank angels—
For they are here and now,
Hopeless loafers,
Who kick their heels at noon
For want of thought,
And idle rich
Who perk to see who looks,
And idle poor
Who perk to see what comes,
And generals, stout and thin,
Leading their noisy, futile armies,
And stouter and thinner judges,
Brooding over what is true.
Preachers who shout of hope,
And undertakers who bury it.
Hoarders of wealth,
Or wasters
Who scatter
What others scrimp and save—
And dancers and singers,
Bidding all to rest, forget,
These,

And apers of the rich
And grinders of the poor,
And those who would be like them.

* * * * *

The mountebank heaven that is to be—
Come and see.

CONQUEST

HAD I but known how complete,
How irrevocable,
The choice—
Had youth,
Illusion,
Not blinded me to all—
If one,
A loving heart,
Had marked the way,
The abysses,
The precipices steep
That
On either hand
Did stagger strength
And chill the heart,
Making my soul to reel
With horror—
How quickly had I turned,
How fled,
How cried: "What?
"Equal to this task?
"Not I
"Not I!"
And lost

—Oh, blessed loss—
The crown of strength,
The crown of fame,
The crown of pain,
The crown of death
That now,
Upon my bleeding brow,
Its thorns caked with my blood,
Lies pressed,
The symbol of my glory
And my gain.

CLOUDLESS PLEASURE

LARKS singing far and near.
In the sweet warm air
And the sweet warm sunshine
A gull that rides at a great height
Viewing the flat world beneath
And little men that tramp the fields
And plough and sow
And Edgren church spire.
Sharp over the spring trees.
And her—
My pet,
My delight,
Her golden ringlets flying,
Her cheeks
As soft
And pure
And bright
In their youth and bloom
As a wild rose.
Running like a wild thing
Over the grass
Over the spring flowers
Here and there

Her eyes radiant with cloudless youth and
pleasure
Her soul radiant with wonder
At the beauty—
The mystery.

And I,
Dreaming young morning dreams.
Of future joyous years
With her

Cloudless, cloudless pleasure.
Boundless, boundless delight
In this hour—
This rose-leaf moment
Under the sun.

GOLD

GOLD, gold, gold—
But there was no gold.
I searched the Argi mountains
Followed their stream-beds,
Sifting their sands
With eager, feverish eyes.
I tapped the rocks
And broke the mountain veins,
And then at evening,
Despairing,
Sat me beside a streamlet,
Therein to cool my fevered feet
And hands.
And betimes
I cursed my life
And this sad journey,
Thinking of great cities,
And a home,
And vast, sweet crowds at evening,
And then this forest,
Dark before the night,
And these bare peaks,
Quite barren of my gold.

* * * * *

But, as I thought and cursed,
A storm arose and broke,
And I took shelter in a cave
Beside this darkling stream,
Only to see the heavens of the west open
And that crimson disc, the sun,
Appear
And stream upon me,
Such gold as in my wildest thoughts
I had not hoped to find—
A golden flood,
All gloriously
Transfigured
Into a warm effulgence
Ethereal,
Glorifying the world,
Making of my darker mood
A myth.

* * * * *

And then, above me,
Flock upon flock,
Came troupials,
Their white bodies
Tipped with the red of their beaks,
Flying athwart
A rose-and-silver rain—
Their cry a bell-like something
So ethereal
They silver raindrops seemed,
Falling into this agate stream.

* * * * *

And then
Into this turbid tarn of mine,
My heart,
Came something—
A sweet sensation of returning peace,
An apprehension of a secret innocence,
Of non-intended evil,
And the presence of a bourne,
Incalculably distant, mayhap,
Or near,
Toward which all things may move,
Or into which they sink.

* * * * *

My gold—
It was this thought.
The rest was dross.

DAKOTA EVENING

OVER the resting land
An evening glow.
And at the barred gates
Of barns
And farms
Cattle.
And about the chimneys
Of this fungoid house
Swifts
And martins.
And over these tents of wheat and hay
That range
Like camping armies
To the west,
A sky of lavender and steel.
And at the west
A border
Of red and rust.

And now,
Before me,
This ivory road
Turns dull with dusk
And the moving figure of a man

Carrying pails
Sways
And fades dimly into it.
And a V of ducks
High in the blue above
Dives swiftly
To this nearby lake,
Safe for the night.
And now,
Swiftly,
Swiftly,
The western rim of crimson fades,
A breath of damp and perfume
Fills the air.
And now
The moving earth
Draws close above itself
Its spangled canopy
Of lambent stars.

THE MASTER

HOW often have I heard him praise
His home,
And, too,
Those of his home,
His own;
The beauty of its peace,
Its care,
Its sanctity.
But I,
Who am of it,
His child—
Well, can I say
He lies,
And that all homes, like his, are lies?

* * * * *

For he
Who makes this thing of vines,
And flowers,
And drives,
And scented chambers,
And halls of portly length,
And upward winding steps—

This place where gardeners are,
And footmen,
And servants to your will—
What think you he is like
Who wills it,
Or his thoughts?

. . . .

Well, this is hell,
A narrow binding place,
Or prison,
Where all on whom he bends his
"love"—
(Say greed,
Or vanity,
Or hate,
Or pride)—
Go shyly at his word
Or softly at his step,
Fearing his voice,
His mood,
His will.
A vulture, he,
None other,
Hovering in the upper sky
Above the weaker wings,
So that we,
His other prey,
May swell his store of pride,
Or fatter grow,
Or fair,
On what he brings—

(Those weaker bleeding things he
brings!)
Yet we,
Like feet-nailed geese
That in a cellar feed
To make a liver-pudding,
Are but his hothouse blooms,
Mulched with the blood
Of thousands of dead things,
The which
He fiercely brings.
For he is one
Who picks the poor to bone
And earns the weaklings' curse
A lord of thousands,
Master of great mills
And roads.
Yet he is vice's friend,
And every sorrow's,
And all diseases'.
For by his greed he wills them.
By strange and devious ways.
He drives the poor
To live upon a crust,
And makes the many
Lament in the ways.
Because of him,
In shadowy ways
They tread,
And sink to naught,
Because of what he does,

Or chooses to withhold.
Yet still,
With lambent smile,
Though heart much harder than the
stones
That make our handsome drives
And carven walls,
He sings of angels
And his own great thoughts,
And love,
And man's true place
Before his Maker,
Bathing God in song.

* * * * *

Yet all his prayers are this
That *he* have peace,
That all that he now holds
Be held secure to him.

* * * * *

What is this thing of strength
To which he prays?
And what its mercy?
And why this force and mood
That wills to strut and stare,
All things compelling,
The while we creep or bow,
Moved by his will—
His dreary, selfish, savage will?

THE NEW DAY

DIM vistas of all but concealed hills to the east,
And the drowsy reiterated chirp of a bird;
Then the faint dilution of the dark
And a chorus of hundreds,
And the lisping wind of dawn over the hills,
And a chorus of thousands;
And the sun itself,
Its thinnest, keenest edge of red,
And the last scant rim of night;
Then day—
Day—
Its golden, strident force and voice,
And man and beast and bird arising,
To sing,
Or sigh.
Day, day, day.

THE FACTORY

UNAPPREHENDED,
The stealing dawn,
And now
The grinding cars,
Bearing their human loads
Cityward or out.
Cars full of men and girls,
Their shabby clothes
Speaking of work,
Their deepest, darkest moods repressed,
Their paling faces
Speaking the needs they feel.

* * * * *

Yet here is one who dreams a dream,
And here is one who laughs,
And here is one who sings a song,
Or moons,
Or scowls;
Old blood achill,
Young blood at play,
Or fearsome youth,
Or gloom, or need,
Upon the march,
The while they dodge the trucks and cars.

* * * * *

But hark—
The giant whistle there
About the corner,
Over the shoe factory,
Under the tall chimney that belches smoke
Against a leaden sky.
It shrieks and bellows its fierce warning,
It yells, it yells:
"Haste ye, haste ye, haste ye,
"Lest ye want,
"Lest poverty o'ertake ye,
"Lest ye may not eat,
"Lest the respect of men fall from ye"—
And they believe it.
As it screams.

* * * * *

Like a flood that feeds a chasm—
Like the grain that fills a hopper.

* * * * *

The clattering feet!
The trembling, fleeing thoughts!
The whirring, murmuring wheels!
Below the giant whistle they believe.

YE AGES, YE TRIBES

YE ages, ye tribes, long parade of nations!
I dream, and ye come back, the strong, the proud, the beautiful,
Rock, cave and temple, burrow and throne, hunter and army.
The mighty show and concealment. unrest and prayer, shrines and tombs!
How have ye strewn the earth, how burned with your insatiate passions, how fallen, fallen.
Oh, the loves alone, the tears alone, the strifes alone—how innumerable.
How has man reveled with woman, master driven slave, Cæsars slain with armies!
How agonies have sweated brows, pains racked bodies, the unattainable lured all.
What of chains, gibbets, hearts of stone?
Has it brought order out of disorder, faith out of fear, aim out of turmoil?
Has it answered "Why?"
Lo, the earth resounds with the bells of creed, and all men pray.
They bow down in wonder, and know not.
They gaze upon one another, and find no answer.

BOOM—BOOM—BOOM

AND you will smile—
Yet see
How ribald
And yet kindly nature,
Finding me infirm
And weak of will,
Totally unable to make my way
In this loud world,
Has still consoled me
For my needs and lacks.

* * * * *

For as a child,
Recessive,
Shy,
My tongue quite tied by fear—
I was without the strength
To front the world,
Its stormy cities.
Scenes.
Both men and women
Frightening me,
But,
Being forced by need,
At last I came
(These very streets agrowl with rage),

And then,
Startled by life,
My way not clear,
Afraid of everything,
I turned at last to this—
To music of a kind—
This drum—
Boom—
Boom—
Boom.

* * * * *

For in its hollow thunders,
As pointless as may be,
I yet have tasted surcease,
A truce to all my fears—
Boom—
Boom—
Boom.

* * * * *

For life to me is torture.
The query of men's eyes,
Their stabbing implications,
I cannot front them.
But here,
Behind my drum,
The queries of the world not faced,
I still can speak,
And yet aloof,
Drowning the shrill hard voices of the
world.
Its bass viol sobs,

The blatant horns of strength,
And all men's thoughts
And voices,
So—
With this—
This drum,
This thundering of my wish—
Boom, boom, boom—
Boom, boom, boom.

* * * * *

It speaks for me,
My own sad soul's great lacks,
The courage that I would
The greatness that I would,
And saying what I would
So fittingly.
I am at peace—
I am at peace.
Boom—
Boom—
Boom.

* * * * *

Oh, listen—
Do but think—
Take knowledge of a fact:
'Tis I—
'Tis I—
That am this drum—
As hollow, maybe,
But I,
Who, with this thunderous voice,

This substitute for strength,
This drumming that is noise,
Do bellow of my needs—
Boom—
Boom—
Boom.

* * * * *

So will I strike—
Boom!
So will I speak—
Boom!
As now—
Boom!
And now—
Boom!
And now—
Boom!
Telling the world in thunder
What I will.

* * * * *

Oh, glorious mastery
Of my great despairs!

THE REBEL

THAT which is deepest in me,
Can but wish.
And sigh.
It is not of the now,
And cares not for this world.
Its ways,
Its processes,
Are old, old.
It sings of ancient things.
Reality,
The now.
What is this day to it?
Duty?
Denial?
Control?
How far are these from it,
This deeper self,
This deepest soul,
That broods on ancient things,
On fields and times that were
But are no more?
The facts of present life,
Its tensions,
Energies,

Successes—
These it knows not.
It broods on naked days
And times more harsh,
And how
It roamed the wide world free,
And strong to do,
And fight,
And die.
But these tame days,
And these vast throngs atramp—
'Twill none of them.
'Twill only brood.

* * * * *

In this loud world
That marches all in time,
Has reason,
Ethics,
Times each mood to all—
What place is there for it,
That knows but its own moods
And needs
And what it now would do.
What more
But dream,
Or sigh,
Or hunger,
On this smooth sphere
That seeks but to be reasonable?

EVENSONG

THORNY locusts line the path
From the river to the village.
Children play by the waterside
And upon the slope above
From which looks down
A chapel with a belfry
And a bell.
There calls

Dong!

It is that hour of the evening
In summer,
When two-thirds of the earth
Already lies
In shadow.
The light no longer flays
But caresses
All that it touches.

Dong!

Is it the voice of a spirit that floats outward
Over the rippling river

With its white, clean stones
A river as shallow
As it is gay?

Dong!

Is it evening's own voice
Full of the pathos
Of the death of day?

Dong!

It is the word of a spirit

Dong!

Winging its way

Dong!

Over farmland cottages and barns,

Dong!

The yellow wheat,
The russet oats,
The bladed green corn,
And the patchwork counterpanes
Of purple and grey
Where grass and wildflowers
Mingle.

Calling,
Calling,
Calling.

Dong!

To rest
Or contemplation

Dong!

To dream.

Dong!

The shadow of the bank
Extends slowly
Across the water.

Dong!

The green of the farther shore
Grows darker
And more alluring.

Dong!

The light,
Gone from the valley
Rests for a final moment
Upon the brow of the opposite hill
Like some radiant bird
Poised for flight.

Dong!

Ding-dong!
Ding-dong!
Ding-dong!

A bird wings by in shadow
And has gone.
The river ripples.
The darkness falls.
Already night's eyes
The lamps,
Wink and twinkle
In the dusk.

A bell,
A poem,
A prayer,
A song,
Has strown with pearls
A happy valley.

PROTOPLAST

MY error consists,
If at all,
In seeking in mortal flesh
The likeness
Of what
Perhaps
Is Eternal.

I have turned to you,
And you are not the one.
And to you,
And within my possession
My very hands,
You have faded,
Or changed.
The things that I saw in you
At first
Are no longer there.
Escaping,
Evanishing,
Changing before my very eyes,
In so subtle a way
That I have not been able to trace
Or stay them
Or you.

And you,
And you,
And you.
Meaning in turn
Youth,
Beauty,
Vigor,
Inspiration,
Strength for me,
Consolation for me,
Courage,
Aspiration.
For Me.

Yet one by one
Like that mysterious law
That effects gold at sea,
Or water in the sun,
The things that you stood for,
The very substance that you seem
Has vanished.
From under my eyes.
Under my eager straining eyes
But to where?
To what eternal garden?
By what supernal throne?

My error,
If at all,
Has been
In seeking in mortal flesh,

A substance that is not flesh,
Or thought
Or reality
But the likeness,
The wish,
The dream, mayhap,
Of something that is eternal,
But will not rest
Or stay
In any form.

THEY HAVE NOURISHED AS ABUNDANT RAIN

HARK! The voices of beauty speaking:
Morning and evening skies;
Winds
And the rustle of leaves;
Flights of wild fowl
And the song of water.
In the crucible of the years
These have yielded
Goodness.
They have distilled for me
As the wine
Of life.
With the passing of the seasons
They have persuaded.
As against myself
Have I been compelled to accept them
As the substance
And the reward
Of my dreams.

THE ANCESTOR

HOW do I know
How many times it is
That I have lived
Or died
Or been again?

* * * * *

Can you conceive a time
When only moods, not deeds,
Or thoughts,
Or words,
Or even the power to make a sound,
Was all man had
To rest him?

* * * * *

There is a something in the depths of each
Allied to that old hunger
That could not then be filled,
Old lacks
That never were supplied,
And old dreams
That never did come true,
Old hungers
And strange longings
That still do stir,—
The sum of many lives.

* * * *

'Tis this that cries
For things that are no more,
That moans and raves
And darksome is,
And dreams dread things
Astir within the heart.

* * * * *

Oh, vain it is
That now, and now, we plead
And croon of better things.
It will not of it,
Ruled by moods alone.

* * * * *

'Tis of an older world it dreams,
And sighs,
This first of all of us.

OCTOBER

IN that clump of maples by the stream
Flames of red,
And along the limbs of the trees
Run sprays of fire,—
Bright licking flames
Of scarlet and gold
And there
Beside that great grey rock
All spotted with dead silver and moss
That clump of alders,—
A troop of dancing girls,
(A troop of laughing girls),—
Comes tripping down this slope
Beribboned and bedecked,
And arm in arm
To this quick stream
That spangled with dead leaves
Red leaves and yellow
Roves briskly to the plain.

Ah, dancing, nodding girls,
Ah, fluttering, frost bit trees,
That in this first brisk wind of fall
Flutter and tremble

Sway and beckon
Your last sweet lure,
Your last sweet curtsey
To Summer
Now dying by this stream.

TO YOU

YOU lead a petty life.
The way is dark, and you see no answer.
You clerk in a store,
Or drive a wagon, or carry bundles;
Perhaps you stand about idle, half hungry,
Not knowing which way to go.
You have a great heritage,
Whether you know it or not;
This universe is for you,
Whether you know that or not;
The stars swing in their courses for you,
Whether you know that or not;
The order of the universe is kept for you,
Whether you know that or not;
Though you perish and are forgotten,
It is still for you.
You may not escape it.

NOVEMBER

THE earth mould smells sweet.
And the roots of the reeds
And the pond rushes
Show wavering
And dim
In the dark water.
And through the oak and ash
And the low shrub of oak
All leafless
Blows the cold,—
The grey,
The antic wind.
And over the sombre
Grass-covered hills
Drifts the white sun
The grey moon.
And about me flutter dead leaves,—
Fingered and fluttered
By a voyaging and curious wind.
A homeless wind.
And I am tired,
Tired.

Shall we ever find what we seek?

We shall never find what we seek.

Then flutter me, wind
Flutter my worn brown spirit to the pool.
Let it sink with the dead leaves
To the dead roots
Of the dead pool.
Let it sink,—
Sink.
For I am tired.
Tired.
I have sought
And I am tired.

WHERE?

WHITHER the old passions?
The fire?
The zest?
I had them.
In my youth,
After the shadowland of childhood
Through which I darkly stumbled,
Feeling an uncertain way,
And adolescence,
With its passions
And its dreams—
(I had them);
Life reared itself aloft
To craggy, glistening eminences,
Veritable peaks of thought,
Himalayas of character,
Splendid mounting roads
Of dream
That seemed to lead to a solution.
My tongue was wet with hunger,
My eyes agleam.
But now,
In age,
As in that early shadowland of youth

By which I came,
I seem to sink—
And sink—
Back into the shadows now
(And as in childhood, blunder),
Into that shadowland of fancy
From which but yesterday
I came.
My soul, as then,
Applies itself to phantasy.
It dreams of blending things,
As in the old, beginning way.
The thick, warm ways of shadow—
It sleeps long sleeps,
Oh, long, long sleeps,
And dreams sweet dreams
That are half sleeps.

* * * * *

Whither the brief passions?
The fire?
The zest?
The knowledge?
Whither have sunk
The Himalayas of character,
The peaks of thought
And dream?

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

EVERYWHERE
In the air about,
Whimpering of their ancient woes,
The envious shadows none may see—
Evicted spirits,
Their places in this world fulfilled,
They
Who shared our ecstasies,
Our agonies,
Who wept,
Exulted,
As do we,
Then died.
But now being out,
They wait,
On every hand;
Prying,
Objecting,
Condoling,
Opposing.
But you
Who now have life,
You cannot hear,
Or see,

Their eyes,
Their despair.
You walk and sing
In a house of shadows,
The while they whimper
Of their ancient ills.

THE NESTLINGS

ROCKING in this rustling green tree,
A west wind blowing,
And bright, white fleecy clouds
Flitting rapidly above.

And then this nest
Hanging in this crotch
Quite dry and safe.
Yet in it,
Bleak and clean,
This little group of bones,
This little group of skeletons
Quite white
And old,—
And cold
A memory of another spring;
A memory of a one-time dream.

The Nestlings

THE HUMANIST

YOU carved, intaglioed ivories of speech!
You graven and minted words!
You groined and silent sanctuaries of thought,
Agleam with jeweled images—
How before your pinnacled altars of phrase and line
Have I not stood agape,
How marveled at the care,
The pain,
And yet—
And yet—
How before the thinly candled effigies
Of those who felt
Have I not knelt and prayed!

US

INTERMEDIARIES, we,
accidents of form between the real and unreal
or what would be.
Always becoming, never being,
a compromise of what is incomplete, complete,
ordered, disordered;
gradations to what never will exist,
but yet attempts.
Illusions of reality!
Because we wish, oh so much, to be real,
we are.
The pity, or the humor!

THE RETURN

DARK night coming down prematurely.
Sky and hills
Mingled in one bitter whirl
Of wind
And suffocating snow
And my heart gloomy
And retracing old days.

Oh, fir boughs,
Cease your teasing scraping against my lattice
Oh, wailing blast
Cease rattling dry cones against my panes
Rest!
Rest!

For another winter
I shall not grieve.
I shall not care
Another winter
And you may come whinneying and snuffling
I shall be beyond your whirl and storm.
Blow! Blow!
Whip and squeal
Another winter

And I shall run with you
A part of that which is behind all wind and
cold and snow
I shall whimper at my own door;
Rattle at my own one-time windows
Sniff and nuzzle about my own one-time home.

THE ABSOLUTE

ECSTATIC moments.
Illuminated moments.
Fleeting mysterious breaths,
Blown across the twilight margins
Of the soul.
That soften the outlines of reality
And blur the calamity of fact.

I am saturated with emotion.
Charged with feeling.

The sharp, sudden arrest
Of unexpected beauty
In strange places,
The swift, piercing shaft
Of an old familiar thing
Caught in a new light.
Rain-dark violets under soaked leaves.
Crimson fungus growths
Under drooping birch twigs,
A beautiful grey rain
Amid the drooping leaves of the year,
A little forsaken path across a field,
In Spring,
Or Winter.

The shadow of a fly
In water.
A light-keeled boat
Upon an enchanted sea.

I am flooded with mysterious happiness,
Divine,
Demoniac dreams.
I am seized
With the very sting and tang
Of youth
And beauty
Divine
And eternal,—
Unchanging and unchangeable
The absolute or essence
Behind reality
Its joy—
Its perfection.

THE LAST TRYST

WALKING by this stream with her, the fairest.

* * * * *

How shall I tell him that I love him not?

* * * * *

This grassy path that rises to the hill,
we shall take this.
Your face is beautiful.

* * * * *

Ah, dare I take the love-light from his eyes?

* * * * *

These pretty flowers:
I kneel upon the hill,
kissing your hands.

* * * * *

My heart! my heart!
I have been sorrowful,
but now the years are gone.
The yearning years are dead.

* * * * *

Tomorrow,
tomorrow
I will tell him that it may not be.

FOR ANSWER

THE dark,
The rain,
The wind,
And these too cold regrets
That now,
Without,
Within,
My soul
Clatter and mourn and squeal
Against my life—
Its follies,
Its defeats.

And yet,
This misery ended,
Rain no more,—
Nor sun,
Nor mood,
Nor hope,
Nor pain,
Nor life,—
Where then shall I—
Where then shall I—

Again
To make my heart to know its beat,
My soul itself,
My life its lust,
Where then shall I
Find rain,
Or wind,
Or dark,
Or moods
Or vain regrets
To whip and mourn and squeal
And make me live.

THE COURTING

CHEMISTRY and mystery.
The call of mood to mood,
Of blood to blood.
Slang phrases and flares of poetry,
Silences that are simple and meaningless,
Silences that are crises.
An arm about a shoulder, a waist, a breast,
Taut nerves,
Tight breath,
Taut muscles.
And the beauty of youth discovered as passing.
And the beauty of life discovered as passing.
And the dread of the weariness of life without love.
And the dread of youth without love.
And kisses, kisses, kisses,—
All the beauty of life discovered
At the edge of its decay.

THE ARTIST

YOU are not stayed
By what was outworn yesterday—
But let it go;
There are so many things
Within the sum of you
That were,
Or will be,
Or that might yet be
If but they would;
You do not trouble,
Do they come
Or not.

And yet you choose,
Adapt,
Compare,
Arrange,
And shape a seemly picture.
If one but throw a peeling in the street
You have a place for that.
It irks you not.
For one
Whose impulse is your wish
Removes it soon
And thinks the thing of value.

Here comes an ant,
Most grateful for a seed
And hungry for it, too.
And here this beggar,
Finding scraps his life
Yet praying prayers to you!
And do a million men
Lie dead upon a plain,
Your kites,
Your condors,
Or your carrion crows—
They do your work.
And,
Though they know it not,
Yet still they do it.
Why, all pestilence itself
Is but a sword of yours,
A glistering sword, albeit.
And want.
And ennui—
Lashing whips, these twain;
You use them ever.
And numbers spell but mood.
And less than many
A regress of whim.
Oh, we,
Vague we,
Who think we are
And are not,
We are but spicules
In your palette's paint,

Bright, changeful things
That make your shades
And tones
In this,
The vasty canvas
That you paint—
And paint
And paint.
An idle,
Idle
Whimful
Scene.

STORM

OH, evil, grey wind
That has torn the sky to bits
And let fall to earth
These drifts of icy dust.
Welcome.
Welcome.
For I walk unheeding
Into
And through
Your troubled effervescence
Your grey chaos.
My eyes sealed to you.
And my heart.
For I behold
An inner world,—
An inner storm
An inner dark
That is wilder
More bleak
More chill.

Oh, extinguished sun
Never rise.

Oh, enclosing
Enfolding dark
And cold
Never yield.
Never break.
Stay.
Stay.
For the sky of my soul
Has been broken by storm
And pain.
And the drifts of icy dust
About my heart
Are deep,
Deep.
And I stagger through drifts that have no ending
To Fall,
And rest
I pray
In a cold
More bitter
Than this freezing whirling storm
That makes this day.

PROMETHEUS

IS it you, after all,
Oh, sufferer of the rock,
Who is the friend of man?
You had, all said,
The courage to stand up,
Although
They chained you to a rock
And set a vulture gnawing
At your vitals.
That other
On the cross
Told each one to be meek,
To put aside the contest
And submit
And wait reward
Some other where.
And he
Of India,
Sitting on a Lotus Bloom,
Did little more,
Though he did promise less,—
No such reward,
At least.
He was no petty agent
Of the powers
That use us to our ill

As was that other.
But you—
You—
You sensed the sorry jest . . .
And yet believed in man.

Evoked the hope
By stern example
And
By your resolution said
"In this
And this alone
Is hope of peace
Or victory—
All else, for man is vain.
Stand up
And brave the rage
The whims
The folly
Of these Gods
Their dulness
Or their hate,
Or slave
For each
His every beck
So shall you win to Godhood
Or to that
Which courage
In the stress of Fate
Should earn—
The envy of the Gods."

FATA MORGANA

LIKE all the women
Of all the world
I have wanted,—
I have sought
A real lover.
I have known many
Who have come
Babbling words
But him
Whom I have sought
I have not seen.
And I have adventured
With many.
Under warm trees
In sweet ways
I have sought
Sought
Beauty
Hope
Faith
In the arms of many
Because of heart pain
I have sought for sympathy
Understanding

But always
Always
These have eluded me—
The substance of my dreams
They have danced before me
As might
A will-o'-the-wisp,
A mirage.
I have put out my hand
In the darkness
And have clasped many hands
That have been seeking, too;
But love,
Love—
My need—
It has evaded me.

AS IT IS WITH THE LIVING

THE drag of life,
Its dulness.
We do not get what we want.
We drift and falter, making compromises with ourselves.
We wonder why nothing happens,
And then some day something does happen:
We fall sick,
Or we fall in love,
Or we lose our work—
Or we die.

THE GUEST

ENTER,
Silently,
Without body,
Without substance,
You thing of dream,
Of beauty.
Move as a breath.
Drift as down
Here,
There.
Move to the fireplace.
Touch the old chair.
Lean to the book.
Stand in that flaw of gold
By the window.
But give not substance to yourself—
Oh, no.
No eyes.
No form.
No color—
Oh, no.
And look not.
See not—
Only as thought,

As dream,
As mood,
Must you come.

One look of your eyes,
One gesture of the hands,
A trace,
A trace
Of the old old spirit,
The old tenderness,
The old love,
And I should cry—
Cry.

PROCLAMATION

BRAGGARTS—
Clowns—
Devils—
Too long have you made us sweat
And bend the knee,
But now no longer.
For you have aided only those
Best tuned to serve you.
Have made of man a beast,
A hog,
And through him as a tool,
Have sensed the pleasures
He was not to know.
But now no longer.
For we,
Prometheus' sons,
Your ancient rebel,
Have garnered grain by grain
Of that you spared,
And from our vilest service wrested strength,
Till now.
At last
We turn,

Defy,
And cast back your commands.

* * * * *

Avaunt!
While now we harness you
And bend you to our ends,
And drive,
And dream.
And may it better be
Than this drab, shabby toil
Wherewith,
Until this hour,
You have afflicted us.
Out! Out!
And see Prometheus' sons
Mount now the throne of power
And plot the paths of man
From sun to sun
And star to star—
Out!

THE RUNNER

THE actuality of life
Is like a wraith
That haunts.
A shadow
That eludes
One—
Escaping by a thousand ways.

A beggar implores from a doorway
A woman screams from a window
Vehicles tear
by—
On their endless
Meaningless
Journeys.
An old man
Rheumy of eyes
And with a thin beard
Leans out of a window
And sighs.
A cat comes running
Followed by a dog—
Dodges into an alleyway
Climbs over a high-board fence,

Creeps through a passage-way,
And then keeps
Running,
Running,
Running.
But to where?
To what?
To whom?
For why?

For
It is not the cat
Or the dog
Or the vehicles
That are running
But life!
Life!
And will not stay
That dodges into the alleyway
That climbs the high board fence
And keeps on running.

But how to seize it?
How to trap it?
How to face it?
How to ask of it?
What?
And why?

SANCTUARY

IF you but knew.
If you but wished.
If but your one art were poetry.

Oh, impregnable defense!
Oh, sanctuary against reality.

As long as there is one least patch of grass,
Any least twig of greenery,
Any space wherein a cloud
May cross the moon,
Or the moon itself shine in;
A fountain in the dark,
Any cool deep or healing shadows,
A lovely, culminating ecstasy—
Shall you not have material enough
Wherewith to build
An impregnable Alsatia
Against human cruelty,
And vulgarity.

THE LITTLE GOD

MAN is already a god
To the dog,
The cat,
All kine,
The oyster,
The fruit of the field and the sea.
He can dispose,
Preserve,
Arrange
Many lives.
Their ways of growth and needs
He knows;
Themselves,
Their fruit,
May be bent unto his every need.
Is he merciful to them?
Yes?
No?
And what, then, is the mood
Of Him
Who is above man?

INTRUDERS

STUPID, vain wishes,
Passionate murders,
Seductions,
Deeds
Against which
The night long
I must keep guard!
But when morning breaks—
The grey day—
The striped sky—
And the clatter of the streets resumes,
How,
With the voices of the town,
They slink back
Into their dark rooms,
And wait the shadow
And the night,
In which only,
Its safe black folds,
They may find their lives.

MOON-MOTH

O WINGED bloom,
living, fluttering flower of the air!

Fresh from your chrysalis,
your wings too new for use
you lie within this wagon track
where danger is, and cannot lift yourself,
but toss and fall,
the higher world your purple wings would know,
above your present strength.

But I who know the pangs of thwarted dreams,
whose feet have stumbled on the stones and thorns,
and stayed,
my soul too weak to rise,
I hold you on my outstretched palm
till strength shall come,
because I mourn your plight
and know your spirit's right to rise above
this mud and death.

Yet in a vague alarm,
not knowing good from ill,
you flutter down again into this rut
beneath my feet, this certain death.

But once again I lift you up,
and give you to the wind to test your wings.
Again you fall, again I lift you so.
And now uncertainly, you fly to that low copse
where brambles grow,
the very world you would avoid,
trying the while to master what is yours,
your right to wing the upper air.

I know the realm of sun and light you crave,
and so I carry you to this green lawn
where breezes play and luring flowers and perfumes
woo and aid.

And now, the tests no longer grim,
the danger far,
you mount that nearest shrub, that lesser tree,
that oak.
And now, caught by the wind,
you sail the thin blue air—
lost to my sight.

Ah, if in my harsh youth,
but one, but one,
had aided me.

DRIVEN

BITTEN with the desire to do.
Sacrificing all happiness
And repose.
The inglorious sweats.
The futile angers.
The futile hatreds.
Dogging all one's rivals with a greedy mood
And all uncharity
Yet bringing forth at end,
And after what vast pains,
The petty thought,
The petty mood,
The petty deed,
And looking for what praise?
A word!
A glance!
A worthless gesture
Made
But to be done!

And all the while
If each but knew
It is not so
That inspiration comes

The great reform,
The noble thought,
The vast, engulfing change
But darkly
As a flood,
A torrent,
Yet freely, freely,
Pulsingly,—
A vasty torrent
Sweeping all before,
Yet bringing each
His need.

Why,
Soul and wisdom,
Light and strength,
These flow as seas
Through strong, unseeking banks
To such as need.
They come as tidal moods
With never thought of gain
From that which is all mood
Since all that is
It is.

THE ASCENT

ALPS of the spirit!
Eternal snows of thought!
Stark peaks of dreams!
And you,
You tireless climbers,
Fronting the deeps,
That man may hope, not fail.

The eye of him ascended,
Its rarer light,
The high suggestion of a world that never was
On earth or sea.
Philosophies,
Religions,
Poems,
Dreams
These they have brought
And these are his
Who
Faced by dark or light
Its mysteries
Its plans unknowable,
Still scales unterrified the utmost Alps
Of thought

Of aspiration
That all may know
A little,
That all may dream
Of more
That may be dreamed.

Alps of the Spirit!
Climbers of the peaks of mystery!
Unresting watchers on the mounts of dreams!
Enduring outposts among the snows of thought!
How strong
How beautiful the courage
To climb
And seek
And die—
That man may hope
Not fail.

ALEMBIC

LO, the disembodied spirit of elder days!
In the notes of a violin,
The sounds from an open window,
The words of an old song.

Cool green rivers and green lawns;
Midsummer heat and gay sunshades;
Fair faces and gay friends—
The sweet drowse of an idle summer day;

White tables heaped with roses
And set with silver and crystal;
Jeweled fingers, moving
In the soft candlelight;
Bare necks bending
And muslins rippled by light breezes;
Diamonds,
Odours,
Bubbles in the wine—
The glory of a faded day.

Ah, how they come with a gush of memory!
How they are restored, with their warmth and dazzle!

How flung into the street for a beggar's portion,
idly!

And all in the strain from an open window,
In a song of the long ago;
In the sound which a hand makes, playing,
Above the dust of the street,
As a penny cast to one's misery.

ENIGMA

COURTS, prisons, policemen,
And workhouses, gibbets, jails.
But over against them,
Hospitals, churches, charities,
And hotels and comfortable homes and estates.
Strong men and weak;
The beautiful and the grotesque and the plain;
And for answer of the weak to the strong,
Peculation, chicanery, deceit.
And for the answer of the strong to the weak,
Courts, gibbets, jails.
But about it all somewhat of beauty,
And through it all somewhat of dream,
And pain, pain, pain—
Passion, passion, passion—
The high ferment of its own unescapable self.

THEY HAVE CONFERRED WITH ME IN SOLEMN COUNSEL

LO, the friends of the souls of men!
By the hillside and the waterside,
And under the tall stars,
Night blossoms innumerable and many trees;
Soft sounds and the lap of waters;
Odours and the sigh of immemorial winds.

My soul has called to many,
But these have made answer:
I have drawn near to many,
But these have extended their arms.

THIS LIVING

A ROAD that leads to a dark forest,—
That dwindles
To a morass.
A wall
Beyond which is an abyss,
And a horizon
Beyond which is nothing.
Yet within,
This side,
Dancing and laughter and song.
And the cries of those who would dance.
And the sighs of those who would die.
And strange birds and flowers and trees
That weave and wave and shimmer,—
Coloring a vision that is not real;
Making a seeming that is not true.

THE HUSBANDMAN

THEY call you lavish,
Spendthrift,
Most profuse
And wasteful.
But not I.
Prudent, rather,
Niggardly almost,
And husbanding
Each grain of what is yours
And swift resuming
To some other work
Each mote
Not forthwith used
Where'er it falls.

For,
How long have you used
The water of your seas
To make your clouds,
Your rains,
Your snows,
Your mists?
The rivers of your plains?
The springs that feed them?
Your morning, evening dews,

Your magic rainbows,
Oft and oft resumed
For use again!
A cup of water spills,
And swift you lap it up,
Resume to vapor,
Or your birds
Or insects come
To drink it up.
And out of smoke,
A single burning field,
Behold those miles of haze,
So delicate
So exquisite.

Of irreproachable clouds
A skyful is contained
In but one pool.
And how sparingly you fashion
The spring garments of your earth.
Not a withered grass blade
Or a leaf
Or any of your seeds,
Profusely blown
Along your world,
But here are used as mulch
For other seeds—
Transmuted,
Reformed,
For other springs
And other years.

Your liberated gases
You resume.
Your rocks,
Your mountains,
And your continents—
Why,
Like an honest forge man
You refashion
And of the forms and fragments
Of old days
Make these new scenes
That now so thrill
Your greatest gift,
Your greatest glory,
Thrift
And change.

THE IMAGE OF OUR DREAMS

BEHIND this seeming substance
Of reality

Behind each burst of golden warmth
Or bitter cold
The light
The heat
Each breeze
Flower
Face
Behind the shadow
The silence
The lack
Picturing something
Seeking something
The image of our dreams

And kind
Or cruel
Thoughtful
Or indifferent
Helpful
Or helpless
Or hateful

We draw near to so many
(We worship so many)

Behind the seeming substance of reality
The image of our dreams.

CONFESSION

I EXAMINE myself, and I discover
Many defects.
I am he who
In my greatest power
Appointed C———,
And others like him,
To office,
Without carefully examining
Into his conduct.
So that I was guilty of sloth
And, worse yet,
Ignorance of men.
As Governor of B———,
Frightened
When victory was all but in my grasp,
I offered easy terms
To a defeated enemy,
In order to appease
A terrified people behind me.
So that I was guilty of lack of foresight,
And fear.
For my efforts to save from misery
Brought more misery,
And my wish to save,

When I might have won,
Resulted in pain
And great death.
I know my end.
Even now it is before me:
An open grave.
Captured,
Derided by those whom I thought to aid—
I shall fill it soon,
For this is war
And failure.
Yet the one virtue which I claim,
And which few possess,
Is this:
I confess,
And freely,
That I am guilty of the greatest of crimes—
Weakness;
And that I have failed
Because I lacked the courage
To be cruel.

THE GREATER WISDOM

TO lose the final breath of strength,
Of courage—
To feel the strength of hope slipping
Faith
Meaning
To look life in its teeth
And know it to be grim
Yet futile
Brutal
Yet meaningless
And worse
Not even purposefully
But only
Accidentally
Cruel;
To have found in it all—
Perhaps—
A single hand
Fond—
Warm—
And then
Having seized it
Yearned over it
To find it, too,
Unintentionally
Meaninglessly
Grow slack

Chill
Worse—
Indifferent
And so to relinquish it
Hopelessly
As it slips from you
And to know that
Sighs
Tears
Dreams
Hates
Are meaningless—
And so to turn
Aimless
Indifferent
Not daring to wish
Not daring to dream
But resigned,—
Resigned at last,—
To relinquish all—
All—
Too tired—
And indifferent
To be a part of that
That has no meaning—

Is not that the ultimate
And is not that
A justification
And
The greater wisdom?

MUSIC

MUSIC, how subtle!
Like a liar, you lie, and like truth, uplift!
As one broken-hearted, you speak of the unattainable.
There is in you a sway and sweep drawn from the eternity of motion.
From the creator of flowers have you inherited color,
From the spheres a voice,
From all outer certainty, meaning.
A miser, you have garnered the moonlight,
And like one who prizes gold
Has reaped of the morning sky.
Flower breaths,
Wild winds,
And the scenes thereof—
Lo! these are your treasures.
Of joy you are a spun thread,
Of sorrow a dark chain;
Of desire, yea, you are the meaning.
All that was echoes within you,
All that is not you are;
Of all that will be
You are the anticipation.

A hope you are, and a fear;
A self-abandonment, and a recovery.
Even of the infinite is your strain
All harmony incarnate.
With flesh weak,
With spirit strong,
With all life fleeting—
Music! Music!
How subtle!

O URGENT, SEEKING SOUL!

O SOUL,
So small,
So white,
So feebly flickering
In every wind of doubt and inquiry,
I stand apart
And think of you:
The fear,
The hope,
The vast uncertainty,
The vaster void
That still confronts you,
The qualms
That fright us all.

For
If you could but grow,
If over 'gainst the dark
And from the dark
More light would come,
More strength,
More breadth,
More height,
More flame:
If now
You could but grow
Each hour brighter,

Steadier,
Taller,
Until,
Like Altair,
Or Algol,
Or giant Betelguese,
You stormed the heavens themselves,
Flaming all space,
And stood
Against the dark
Thus wondrously transfigured
(—O ultimate, radiant hope—)
A tower of fire,
A banyan field of flame,
Flaring to light the shadows,
Or to joy,
All sorrow gone
And pain
And death
And fear.
How then,
How then,
O soul?
For such is now your dream.

The vasty void illumed.
A world,
A universe
Alight,
Aflame,
With you.

BEYOND THE TRACKS

POOR little houses
Mean little houses
Beyond the city.
Fringe.
Riff-raff.
Trash.
And their narrow little gardens
Where too closely housed animals
And piles of decaying manure
And wallowing, grunting pigs
Make something rank
And heady
Of the air.
And they are lighted
By stale kerosene lamps.
And their rooms
Occupied
By section hands
Who work on the railroad,
Or field hands
Who work in the beet-fields
For a dollar
Or two
Or three

Beyond the Trenches.

For a long day.
Yet their lamps
At night
Glow with a strange warmth.
And the smokes from their chimneys
Rise straight
Into the cold air.
And there is a song
A banjo
An accordeon
Mingled with loud cries
And sworn commands.

But odors
Sounds
Strange moods
Strange dreams
And irritations
And wants
Mingle
And evanesce
Into the upper darkness,—
The something hugeness
That now
About us all
The All—
Spreads its evidence,—
The purple brocade of velvet
That is so heavily
Spangled
With stars.

THE FACE OF THE WORLD

I LOOK into the faces of all those who pass me,
I read the travesty of living:
Youth with its color and hope;
Age with its weariness and despair.
I note the glory of prosperity; I note the horror of poverty.
What ill is this that writes itself upon a twisted countenance?
Liver or kidney or heart or lung—
Some misdirected energy forcing the body to complete decay.
And yet for all its wretchedness there is enough of youth to keep the world beautiful!
For all its butchery there is enough of life to keep it gay!
Age cannot predominate; youth cannot fail.
There is a fountain of youth,
It bubbles over weariness;
It keeps decay hidden;
It hides the dead.
There is but one worthwhile face to the world—
It is that which youth gives it.

DEFEAT

THE ache of an unfulfilled dream
The void of an unaccomplished delight.
Heart calls to heart
Dream to dream
But without answer

* * * * *

Along this wooded knoll
Revealing
The distant fields,
Your home,
The steeple of your church,
The tall heads of blue-bells
With curled back necks
And upturned faces
Nod and glow.
And from among the débris
Of dead twigs and leaves
Spring bracken
Straight of stem
But with angular branches
Rise above my head
And the path that comes across the fields
Comes from you

Your home
And the smoke that rises
In a little blue curl
From your chimney
Speaks of you
And I wait
And wait—
But you will not come
Heart does not call to heart
Nor dream to dream—
And yet this pain

* * * * *

The path that approaches from across this field
Passes at my feet
And leads into the wood
And there is a stile
Below dark trees
Where two
Might linger
Face to face
Hand in hand
And overhead
In this very thicket
A thrush sings
With the rapture of anticipation
Of acceptance
And he is answered
From across these fields—
But I—
I—

* * * * *

Heart does not call to heart
Nor dream to dream
And yet I wait
And dream.

THEY SHALL FALL AS STRIPPED GARMENTS

NOT here, oh, you halls arranged for perfect living!
Not in these lighted chambers of mirth and pleasure!
But in the sky-breadth and field-space that await—
The tentless sunlight and moonlight.
You streets, you theatres, you showplaces of society;
You marbled salons of many men;
You glories of the walled town—
Lo, for a time you may entertain,
For a time you may make me forget.
Yet shall I leave you in silence, wearied;
I shall go out into the wondrous open;
I shall lay me in my green chamber and rest.

SERAPHIM

CLAP hands,
Or stir,
And up—
Up—
A world of wingèd things:
Angels of the jungle,
Seraphim of the heat,
With thin and supple necks
And colored beaks
And curved breasts
And reedy legs
Outspread;
And honks and squeaks
And strangest cries
And beating of great wings.
Tinted seraphim
That weave and swing in unison
Over the glistering wavelets
And the blue-black deeps of pools,
That sweat beneath the palms
And the stifled grasses.

How now, O Seraphim?
How goes it, O legions of the jungle,

Spirits of the heat?
From what strange deeps of thought
Or mood
Have you come up?
And where will you fly,
O Seraphim,
When there is no longer water,
Or air,
Or heat,
Or other eyes
To view the wonder of your wings?

AVATAR

MY arm,
An army brought into existence by the impulse which I give.
My eye,
The brains of those that I create at will,
Brains powerful to mortals, toys to me.
My desire,
Men and women dancing, ages through.
My pleasures,
The passions and fervors by which they die.

PASTEL

A GREY day—
A grey sky—
And the grey, grey melodies
Of a grey, mad brain.

THE LAST VOICE

I SAT alone
Up on a promontory
Built of nothingness,
The sun and stars gone out,
Emptiness above
And below,
And icy cold.
And there
There came a voice
And it was this:
Beauty,
Its worship,
Shall never die.

EYES

NO subterfuge,
Or sleeping evil,
Or apparent scorn
Within their changeling power.
No hate,
No brooding chill,
Of evil
Or
Of ancient wrongs.
Only luminous with yearning,
Latent or revealed.
Eyes seeking,
Pleading,
Weary
Hurt eyes.

MARRIAGE

THE great storm,
The blackness of its forehead.
The glitter and thrust of its eyes,
Meditating tumult,
Desiring destruction,
Rushing madly
With flames and force
To combat,
To the destruction of all.

* * * * *

And yet,
Before it,
The still, wide spaces
Of light
And warmth
And peace.
The immense spaces
Of not storm
Into which it must hurry—
Against which
It must hurl itself
And by them
At last

Be enveloped,
Soothed,
Dissipated
By the sheer immensity
Which it may not enfold.

* * * *

The union?
Its fruit?
Soothing,
Needed,
Helpful
Rain.

PASTEL TWILIGHT

TWILIGHT—
The mystery of dark walls;
Of dark, vacant spaces between,
Of lamps newly lighted,
And walls
Yellowly smeared
With pale light,
And now—
Along the evening streets—
Evening figures
In half light,
Half shadow,
A drover with a cow in the road,
A grocer's boy,
With a cigarette
And a basket,
Whistling blithely;
And dim figures,
Male,
Female,
Before isolated windows,
Studying
In the pale light

The fineries of dress,
After the released strain
Of the day.

* * * * *

Yet mystery,
Bewilderment,
Strangeness,
Romance,
Where by day
For want of shadow
Could only be
That which is neither strange
Nor beautiful.

TREES

I SIT on my balcony
And look on the trees
In the park.
I love them so.
For me,
At least
They take on the attributes of people,
Friends,
Happy souls,
Tortured souls,
Resigned souls,
Indifferent souls.
The man with the axe,
He is their murderer.
The man with the shears,
The spade and barrow,
He is their friend and physician.
And mine.
Their forms—
The grace with which they construct themselves—
It is called chance—
Yet what?

The mechanism of an immense,
Restless,
Beauteous
Spirit
Of whom they speak.

But their serenity!
Their sensitivity
To light,
Heat,
Cold,
Wind,
Shadow,
This—
That—
Oh,
These appeal to me
As do the same attributes
In those who are free to move
And who call themselves
Men.

FUGUE

YOU and I
You and I
But not always you and I—
Only on occasion—
Each meeting a sudden thing,
A rapturous thing;
Each filled
With every atom
Of all the beauty
Of you
And all the beauty of me,
Fiercely expressed.
Not the faintest cloud
Of sincere
Quarrelsomeness.
Yet ever and ever
Repeated doubt,
Feigned anger,
Followed by tender forgiveness,
Or—
Preceded by it—
The ability of each
To let the other know

What separation,
Absence
One from the other
Truly means—

(Ripping heartaches,
Silent tears of fear,
The hopeless smiles
Of becoming resigned
To the inevitable,
To permanent departure.)

Yet together
The lull
Of absolute silence
In which
The thoughts of each
Are expressed by each
In eye searches—
Heart moods—
Blood moods—
* * * * *
Yet—
Not always so
Rather
Real doubt—
Real fear—
Uncertainty based on fact
And the power to reason coldly,
Sadly,

Hopelessly,
Fatally;—
To decide so—
The while
Older joys
Older ills
(As mirage—
As delight)
Shimmer
And quiver
In the remote
And golden
And irreconcilable
Past.

DECADENCE

CUT jonquils dying in a pale green vase.
A rose in full bloom but at the threshold of decay.
Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, Confucius.
Any symbol of conclusion.
The spirit of non-resistance.
A crown of thorns.
A sunset.
The forlorn loveliness of prayer.

What, pray, has vulgar virility to do with these?
Since when has savage, dominant desire
Shared with these their humble mood?

..... Decadence .....

THE GREAT VOICE

FROM all the mountains
A message—
Swish! Swish!
It is the wind from the peaks.
And from the great canyons.
Whiu! Whiu!
It is in the wind from the great plains,
And the rivers,
And seas,
Drawn across and through them
As through teeth.
And the forests thrash their branches,
The great trees and the little,
They shake and bend,
For this is the great voice.
From all the great distances,
The great voice,
In the hills and the valleys,
Incessantly uttering the same message.
Behold thou!
Behold thou!
Before all was I

And when all is no more
Still am I
The Great Breath,
The Great Vision
I.

THE BROOK

OUT of the mysterious beyond
And into my garden
Splashing brightly
Down a weir.
And bulrushes growing
In splendid clumps.
And beyond these
Pampas grass
And yellow
And crimson
Spikes of hollyhocks.
And through brown trunks
And green branches
A blue suggestion
Of wonderland
The air—
And the distant sky.
And I pause,
Young
And spellbound,
Beauty-bound.

For from the base
Of the cascade
It flows so gayly,
My brook
Beside a footpath
Where now a robin bathes
And then a thrush.
And two thatched cottages on the left
Crave its company.
And here are ducks
A-voyaging,
And willows, low.
And now great trees
So tall—
Their faces in this stream,—
Above the deep places
Making shadows
Among tangled weeds
Where fishes lurk.

* * * * *

But now
I follow the small stream
And lose it,
Only to find it again—
Where it has left the garden
Far beyond.
These shabby shacks!
This wretched mill!
This filth!
These cinders!

And the very soul of the brook
So darkened—
Befouled.

* * * * *

But not differently to my own soul.
Oh, no.
For,
Far from the garden of my youth,
I meet myself,
My own soul,
Where it has left behind
The great trees,
And the little flowers
Of my earlier self.
And now,—
Amid filth
And stains
Desolately
It wanders,
Looking back.
Dreaming back.
Into the garden of my youth
The mysterious beyond of my past
Where my youth
And my heart
Still are.

THE FOOL

ALL day
All day
I go about my personal affairs.
See my homely neighbors,
Deal with my family,
My friends,
Enter upon matters of business,
Take heed of my personal needs
And interests,
Think of my properties,
And
Labor making no immediate call,
Walk betimes,
Book in hand,
Or
With my thoughts

* * * * *

But
Always
Always
There is this inner scene,
Which does not concern
This exterior thing,

Yet is more real,
More beautiful,
More valuable,
To me.
For it is
Not material.
Can never be.
Has soul space
Thought breadth
Mind breadth,
Which this
This other
Has not,
And is
Where I would be—
And am
Who still shake hands with slovens,
Meet
In the shape of tradesmen,
Fools,
Dullards,
Things of clay,
Who think of houses—
Lands—
Food—
Clothes—
As the substance of reality,
Its value.

But I—
I

Am not of them.

* * * * *

All day—
All day—
I go about my personal affairs,
See my homely neighbors,
Deal with my family,
Friends,
Enter into matters of trade,
Contract,
Take care of my personal needs,
And of those dependent on me.

* * * * *

But the loneliness!
The heartache!
The weariness!
For
Not by my will
But my pity,
Am I chained—
To those
Who have neither
Dreams
Nor illusions
Such as mine.

THE MARCH

A HINTERLAND of darkness—
Doubt—
A foreground of anxiety—
And across the vast surface
Marching—
Marching—
The armies of the living
As against the legions of the dead.
Yet trifling in gayety
And vigor
And dreams
Or trudging in weariness
And weighted with treasures,
Or empty-handed,
Yet moving, moving,
Sated,
Or gay—
Or sorrowful—
But marching
Marching
And wondering
Hands above eyes—

And dreaming—
Or fearing to dream.
Yet seeking
And marching—
Marching—
The armies of the living
As against
And toward
The legions
Of the dead.

DREAMS

ALWAYS within the heart,
Always before the eye,
A lovely filigree
Of dreams you have had,
Of dreams I have had—
Sweet—
Gay—
Sad—
Of Pearl
Of Ruby
Emerald
Jet—
Of oneself—
Of another—
Of oneself with another—
But lonely
Lovely—
The essence
And the illusion
Of life.

FIRE OF HELL

LOVE
That stands before the face of
indifference,
Or
That with passion aroused
Must yet expire
Before the gaze
Of reality.
Hope—
That no substance has,
No fulfillment,
Yet
Because of a dream of beauty,
Must burn furiously,
Before the chill,
Unresponsive face
Of Fate
That knows not
What it is
To hope
Or love
Or aspire.
Desire
That dies
As Life smiles.

LILIES AND ROSES

ORBED—
Effulgent
Under the moon
The lily floats in the water.
The rose—
On its stem
In this perfumed,
Lovesick
Air.

* * * * *

But in desire?
Remorse?
Intense passion?
Or only the shy responses
Of beauty
To shadow
And tranquillity?

* * * * *

Oh, vessels formed of the substance of starlight.
Oh, spreading chalices,
Brimming with a distillation
Of moonbeams.
Of what do you dream?

Breathing what?
Sensing what?
In this garden of roses
On the face of this pool?

BY THE WATERSIDE

LET us watch the moon
Shining on the lagoon,
Its silvery reflection
Writhing like snakes
In the trail of those oars
Of that boat.

* * * * *

You have the face of a seraph.

* * * * *

Let us watch the sailboats,
Their bodies blackness,
Their sails mysteries of mist and gloom,
Disappearing into the darkness.

* * * * *

Oh, the glory, the lure of your face.

* * * * *

Let us listen to the rippling voices,
The faint, fading laughter
Of lovers
Under these sails.
The lap of these faint, poignant ripples
On the sands
Of this shore.

* * * * *

Oh, the torture of your eyes!

* * * * *

Let us look at the stars—
Soft, mellow points of light,
In velvety depths
Above the trees and grass
Of that shore beyond.

* * * * *

The silver meaning of your voice!

* * * * *

Let us listen to the stirring of the wind—
So faint—
So frail—
In the leaves
Of these trees.

* * * * *

But, oh—
Oh—
The perfection
The delusion,
The destruction
Of your eyes—
Your lips—
Your arms—
Your hair.

EMPTY
Hungry
Yearning
Never to be blessed
Never to be repaid
For the miseries
And deprivations
Of a wretched fortune,—
An untoward fate
And yet—

* * * * *

A dream within the mind,
Upon a lounge within a miserable room,
Or sleep
And dreams
In however bitter a place
And then—

* * * * *

I am in a ship
That is of silver
Against a dark blue sea,
Under stars
That are of gold.

And I have found her—
My need—
Whatever that is—
The answer to it
Yet always the wonderful,
The princess of my need.
And in a hall of amethyst,
Against a throne of roses.
And arms outstretched;
No inquiry,
No disdain,
Song in her voice,
Flowers in her breath,
Stars in her eyes.
My needed, needed answer.

* * * * *

In a hurricane of light,
Of color,
Of peace
I am restored,
Repaid,
Repaid
In this bitter place
For my lacks,
My miseries,
My yearnings,
And my needs.

YOU ARE THE SILENCE

WITHIN and beyond all motion
Force—
Innate in space—
Time—
Or that which is measureless
And beyond time—
Yet watchful,
Or slumbering,
A thought—
Or a machine—
But invisible
And impalpable—
Yet the breath
Behind your galaxies
And the meaning
Of them;
Of your spaces,
Voids—
Voices—
Motions—
Moods—

The frailness of the harebell,
The fire

And fever
Of the cobra—
Fear and courage—
Love and hate—
All sensitivities,
Delights,
And terrors.

* * * * *

You—
You—
Are the Silence.

LOVE SONG

OH, to me—
To me!
You are
Like a basswood tree—
A basswood tree
Full of honey and fragrance,
And with a million blossoms upon it.
Or—
And—
You are like an idol
Made of ivory and pale silk,
And set in a shadow
Where, still,
Evasive,
Elusive,
You remain—
Unreal,
Beautiful,
Wonderful—
Or—
And—
You are like an ocean of blue air
Under a southern sun,

Where condors hang
Above great peaks,
Or restful cranes
Wade
In level waters,
And perk
And pick.
Or—
And—
You are like a window
In darkness,
A deep window
Opening upon a great darkness,
Where yet amber stars
Are glowing
And a bird sings.
Or—
And—

* * * * *

But oh—
Oh—
You are the basswood tree
And the idol
And the blue air
And the darkness
And the amber stars.
A hunger
And a need.
My need—
And my dream.

DIVINE FIRE

BREAKING as moods,
Dreams—
Aspiration—
Desire—
Suffusing this thick, torpid flesh
As with light,
Boiling this sluggish blood
As with fire.
Weaving vivid, hot designs
With and through
The superficial flesh,
Upon the inert bulk
And weight of matter
Of life.
Burning,
Burning—
Away—
Away—
All material heaviness.
Melting—
Melting
As with livid tongues of heat
The stubborn resistance of matter.

Driving,
Driving
To movement,
To action.
Everything—
Everything
That is matter
As against
Mind.

* * * * *

Oh, inward flush of light,
Oh, inward flame of fire.
You—
You
That can make fire of flesh,
Song of fire—
You—
You
That will consume at last
My dull, dull body
And set yourself,
Your flaming,
Indestructible
Self
Free
Free
And in my place.

IN THE PARK

YOU—
Who are so graceful and so beautiful,
Of whom do you remind me?
You oak—
So lumpish—and yet so strong,
Extending your arms
Above this grass—
And you—
You elm—
Globed—
Unshaken—
Never tortured
By storm or drought,
Of whom do you speak?
And you—
You ash—
Beaten and broken.
And you—
You larch—
Stunted and dwarfed—
Of what ills
And to whom
Are you not a symbol?

(I could say.)

Yet
Toward you all—
So strong or so broken,
So perfect or so gnarled,
I offer the same offering,
Pity,
As toward men
Whom life has either prospered
Or beaten.
You failures—
You successes—
Oh—
One may measure you all.
Offer you
An encompassing measure of understanding,
Of sorrow,
Or joy,
That life,
Its furthering favors,
Or devastating neglects,
Must come as law—
The mechanism of accident—
And leave you
Beautiful—or miserable
As you are.

REGRET

ATTENTION, you!
I have spent my life
In noble aspirations
And efforts—
Faithfully serving my fellowmen,
According to their dreams
And their illusions.
And they
In return
Have loved me
For the virtues that
They have assumed I had
And they had not—
The tolerance and charity they lacked,
The generosities
And faith
And courage—
And yet
Since they hoped these things of me,
I
I
Have sought to declare them,
To be them, even—

Realizing them in myself
As best I might.
Yet now—
Now
Behold!
As a chrysalis
Within its shell—
A mummy
In a golden cloak,
I
I
Lie imprisoned,
Enfolded,
Smothered
Into stillness,
Failure,
Death,
By the very things
I sought to be
Yet was not—
These dreams of theirs—
While life—
Life—
Pulsating
And wondrous—
Which they lived
And I lost
By seeking to be
What they wished me to be—
Has passed me by.

TO A WINDFLOWER

OH, fine gesture,
Oh, excellent symbol,
Evoked by the sun out of the soil,
Obeying an attraction of light,
An attraction of thought,
But
So carelessly fragile,
And yet
So aglow with sensation,
Warmth,
Impassioned color,
Form,
You are—
You are
A reaction to what?
A thought of what?
A condensation of what?
Recording whose mood?
Gayety?
Breath?

* * * * *

I will sit before you and ponder,
You windflower.

I will seek to imagine you
As pure form
As thought,
Color—without color—
As idea—
Or tone, only, maybe;
I will think of you as pure feeling,
Beyond sensation,
And then—
And then—
Maybe—
These inscrutable things
Out of which you take your rise
Will interpenetrate
And dwell
In me.

THE ONE AND ONLY

THIS never-ending yearning
And seeking
For one—
One—
One—
His or her face—
His or her favor—
Mood—
His or her meaning
Or smile,
Or hand clasp—
This drawing near
Yet only to draw away—
Uniting
Only to separate—
Loving and then hating,
For a time,
A time,
Yet nonetheless harried
By this great urge
To find
And love;—
To escape weariness,

To escape loneliness,
From which,
From which,
There can never,
Never
Be an escape.

THE ROAD I CAME

AH, what is this
That knows
The road I came
And go again?
Instinct
Impulse
Assurance
Fear?
That whispers of paths
Beyond these
Which now I seem to know
Yet do not;
Wastes,
Planes,
Immensities,
In remote consciousness,
Where is no breath of self,
Such as I witness here,
Yet of which
To be conscious
Is wisdom—
Power, perhaps,
Creative strength.

* * * * *

Oh, inorganic
Yet breathing
The organic,—
Inarticulate,
Yet voicing itself
Articulate
In heights,
Depths,
To which we rise
Or sink—
Yet infinite
And from which we take our rise.

* * * * *

Oh, space!
Change!
Toward which we run
So gladly,
Or from which we retreat
In terror—
Yet that promises to bear us
In itself
Forever.

* * * * *

Oh, what is this
That knows the road I came?

THE EVANESCENT MOMENT

IN the brief moment of love only
Under the dark blue sky.
In the brief moment of love
Under the stars.
In a spring night
A dream—
A seeming meaning
Love itself, no less.
In that hour!
And then,
Thereafter,
In the chaos of days
Of slow drifting days
Of effort
To live,
The weary, weary seeking
To recapture that hour!
Love itself, no less
The ecstasy!
After the brief moment of love
Under the dark blue sky.

PHANTASM

I STAND outside your door
And beg.
You view me
With the gaze
Of a Dives
Or
A Croesus.
I take this knife
And
Because of my imagined ills
Now plunge it in your heart.
You view my deed as wrong,
I
Your insolence,
Or indifference
As brutal,
Vile.
I prate of love
And die of it.
You yearn for wealth
And die of that.
Lunatic to me
Your illusion of grandeur.

Lunatic to you
Mine of tenderness
And defeat.
Yet you—
I—
Your grandeur
And my ills—
But variants of one thing,
Degrees of the same thing,
An immense illusion
Of difference
In being,
Of being itself,
Between an illusion of heat
And an illusion of cold.

LITTLE web
Little spinner
Between this window
And this ceiling—
Building,
Building,
So earnestly,
So passionately
Your gossamer web.
I have swept you down,
And down,
And again.
And yet,
Because of some mood,
Some need,
Or plan
Of yours,
You have built
And rebuilt here
Against all my mood
To prevent.
Yet—
Little spinner,

Your little web
Is no different from mine
Or my intent
From yours.
Are we not all spinners?
And each spinning what?
A House of Dreams?
And we toil so,
At my dream
At your dream,—
And hurry
You and I,
Little spinner.
And betimes our webs
Are silver or grey,
Gold or black,
As the light shines
They may even glow
With rainbow hues
In the sun
Before
Strange chance
Wrecks each again.
Oh,
Even a broken and entangled web,
Its shreds dangling
In the sun,
Is beautiful.
And mine,
Like yours,
Has been—

And is—
Broken.
Its frayed ends
Wave in the wind
And sun.
And you are like me
In this, too,
That we have begun so often
Each
After a new failure.

* * * * *

But we,
Who have sought to build
You and I,
A House of Dreams,
And seen it shattered,
And have again rebuilt
And again seen it shattered
And again rebuilt
And again seen it shattered,
And again—
And again—
And again—
We know,
Little spinner,
We know
The meaning of a dream
That may never be.

PIERROT

TO keep Life's heart from breaking,
I—
With my cap and bells,
My tambour and my gestures,
My capers and my leer.
Because of dullness,
Greyness,
Want
Misery.
To keep Life's heart from breaking,
I,
With my cap and bells.

THE OLD SOUTH

WINEY globules on swelling twigs.
A leaden sky
Sagging with rain clouds
Above raw-colored
Red clay
Land.
And
At the foot of this garden
A river—
The Chatahoochee,
And behind it—
Looking down upon it,
Windowless,
Vacant,
This old, forlorn home,
With rotting steps
Descending
From this wide veranda
Between tall white wooden columns
To the grass—

* * * * *

And within
Empty rooms,

Still glowing with ancient darkness.
And without
About
Poverty,
Age,
The flavor of forgotten
Or defeated
Ambitions.
Negroes sprawling
About dilapidated huts
And whites,
Poor and indifferent
Where once a slave master walked
His cultivated fields
And dreamed his dream
Of Mastery.

* * * * *

One cannot rest here.
One can only restlessly walk here
And dream
Or sigh.

* * * * *

For the rotting steps of this ancient home
Descend—
Descend
And down them has descended,
Decades since,
All—
All—
That was to be.

LINKS

UNDER the arc lights,
In the twilight,
Astarte,
Apollo,
But in a new guise.
She—
With warm, cuddling motions—
He—
With eager, awkward gestures
And seeking eyes,
Both with intriguing gait.

* * * * *

Look
It is Main Street,
And she sixteen
He eighteen.
It is Main Street
And the evening parade
Of those who would be happy—
(The world-old parade)
Has begun.
Boys and girls,
Pathetic boys and girls,

The twilight parade of the young,
Stirred by mysterious intimations—
Shop girls—
Apprentices—
Their first earned money invested
In stockings,
Dresses,
Ribbons,
Hats,
Suits,
Ties,
Collars,
And walking fearsomely,
Yet valiantly,
In hope,
In dread—
But eyeing meaningly,
Alluring fearfully,
Accosting fearfully,
Only to retreat fearfully,
Each according to his strength
And need.

* * * * *

Under the arc lights
Out of the twilight—
Astarte,
Apollo,
(The world-old parade)
Moths seeking lamps,
Glow-worms threading mysterious grasses,
Mysteriously.

But with warm tinted moods,
Tinted, hot faces,
And haloed with bright hair,
Their eyes glowing like pools
In the dark
Under the considering stars.

* * * * *

"I will speak to you.
"I will be possessed of you.
"Or, love you.
"And dream of you.
"Or another,
"Until I am possessed of one
"Or another
"And together we shall replenish
"And continue
"This ever fading,
"Ever changing
"Scene."

AS WITH A FINGER IN WATER

AS with chalk upon a board
Or
With a pencil upon a slate,
Or
With breath upon a pane
Or mist
Or
With a stick in the sand,—
Or dust
The aspirations,
The dreams,
And the achievements
Of men.

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